

Feminism and the University

**The Roles of Disciplinary Field and Educational
Habitus in the Lives and Works of Two Feminist
Intellectuals**

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the production of feminist theory as a material, social, and institutional practice: it aims to understand feminist intellectual production as to some extent circumscribed by historical, biographical, political, and especially academic conditions. Specifically, it compares the intellectual trajectories and scholarly output, feminist and otherwise, of theologian Mary Daly (1928-2010) and philosopher Judith Butler (1956--). The analysis tries to keep three aspects of those lives in mind at once: firstly, the properly intellectual character of the intellectuals' ideas; secondly, the specifically *institutional* (that is, university) conditions in which they have found themselves; and thirdly, the broader biographical conditions of their lives. By keeping all three in mind at once, we get to a potentially fuller and more nuanced picture of their intellectual trajectories than may be available through critical appraisal of their works alone. The thesis is an original contribution to knowledge both in as much as it brings together Daly and Butler, two apparently fundamentally opposed feminists, in order to see what thinking them together allows us to do, and in the applications and adaptations of Pierre Bourdieu's social theory which help explain these feminists' trajectories.

Through a re-working of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus, the analysis works through the concept of fields of intellectual endeavour. Academic disciplines but also broader structures such as the field of intellectual production work with and against intellectual producers, creating both possibilities and constraints for intellectual work. Developing a broadly Bourdieusian theory of symbiotic relations between what Bourdieu terms *habitus* and *field* (that is, trying to identify the mutual constitution of these aspects of social life rather than the primacy of either), the thesis argues for the fundamental role of agential negotiation and strategy in the context of institutional and disciplinary constraint. And in the context of this adapted Bourdieusian theory, I argue finally for the disciplinary field of women's studies as a potentially fruitful institutional and intellectual space for a feminist negotiation of the university.

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Introduction

Feminist Intellectual Production and the Disciplines

Sure, there was always the dream of the university, but look what's happened to me.

Mary Daly¹

At a recent feminist conference, I found myself in the midst of a conversation about the latest publication of a rather media-friendly young feminist. The other delegate and I agreed about the limitations of the book, in particular its negative portrayal of young, working-class women, and its often rather unreflective relation to the Frankfurt School. So far, so indicative of the kind of fun you can have at a feminist conference. But before long my interlocutor had made a claim which seemed to me both something of a leap from our prior conversation, *and* rather familiar to me from other, similar discussions: in a rather off-hand manner, the claim was made that this book, despite its protestations to the contrary, was *not* in fact a work of feminism at all.

Thinking about this entirely casual remark on the train home, it seemed to me that there were a number of implications with which I suspected my acquaintance would not be happy, but which hovered somewhere under her claim: that there is a perhaps unspoken, but broad, agreement about both the subject matter and political orientation of legitimate feminist theory and, moreover, that such delimitations are so widely agreed upon that they can be alluded to unproblematically and with no little nonchalance. *In short, that we know what real feminist intellectual work looks like and we can call out those who claim to produce it when they do not.* I do not believe that this is what

¹ Mary Daly with Catherine Madsen, 'The Thin Thread of Conversation: An Interview with Mary Daly', *Cross Currents*, 50.3 (2000) <<http://www.crosscurrents.org/madsenfoo.htm>> [accessed 19 February 2000] (para. 51 of 99).

my (incidentally very pleasant) acquaintance meant to imply, nor that many feminist academics would endorse the claim phrased in this way, given the pains we go to in order to disabuse our students of any monolithic conception of feminism, past or present. I think we would not, in general, claim to be in the business of tidying up feminism or staking out neat perimeters for its work: often we try to do quite the opposite, to insist on the relevance of a feminist analysis in spaces previously considered gender-neutral, or to push ahead with new feminist formulations which might speak to a new generation or a different audience. And yet this remark, casually delimiting the bounds of legitimate feminist theory, was not new to me, and did not seem at the time to cause much trouble for its speaker either. I was put in mind of Wendy Brown's rhetorical questions in 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies':

Especially given the strange routes by which most faculty arrived at women's studies, and given the diverse materials we draw upon to vitalize our own research, who are we to police the intellectual boundaries of this endeavor? And how did we become cops anyway?²

Brown's questions have a cynical edge, but I would wish to strip them of this undercurrent and instead ask them in all earnestness: how *did* we become cops?

In this thesis, I am interested in what is going on at the points when feminist intellectual production is regulated, policed, or enclosed – in short, when it is *disciplined*. In particular, I am interested in the institutional conditions of intellectual production, in how feminist academics have had to negotiate the restrictions which academic structures place on what can be thought and said. The mechanisms of academic discipline produce both opportunities and constraints for intellectual producers and, whilst such

² Wendy Brown, 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies', *differences*, 9.3 (1997), 79-101 (p. 85).

mechanisms by no means define the perimeters of scholarship absolutely (this would result in intellectual stagnation), academics must find a way to get published within the specificity of this institutional context. By looking not only at women's studies, the intellectual and institutional space which feminists have cleared for themselves, but also at other disciplinary configurations in which feminist academics have found themselves, I hope to avoid the rather sceptical timbre of Brown's questions (and title). There are indeed restrictions as well as opportunities afforded by the disciplining of feminist intellectual space as women's studies, but by comparing those constraints to those of traditional disciplines, we can more accurately gauge the nature of the difficulties and some potential ways to overcome them. What, specifically, are the constraints and opportunities produced by disciplines, including women's studies? *How* do they enforce regulation of intellectual work, and how do individuals resist such regulation? Is women's studies a different kind of discipline, and if so, what can we make of that difference?

With questions such as these in mind, the thesis traces the intellectual and disciplinary trajectories of two American feminists who have become controversial figures for feminism on both sides of the Atlantic: Mary Daly and Judith Butler. Although they have negotiated markedly different historical, institutional, and socio-economic conditions, there are nonetheless crucial similarities between them, despite their apparent opposition in common-sense narratives of feminist history. Extremely successful in their educations, they entered traditional humanities (theology for Daly and philosophy for Butler) as intellectual producers but became increasingly estranged from the restrictive effects of traditional fields, instead coming to see their work as belonging to some broader intellectual domain. As feminists who in some sense left the intellectual home of their disciplines, they are interesting to me

here partly because they did *not* find a home within women's studies. Their cases, then, may help us interrogate more closely what the relation between the academy and feminism tends to be, what it could be, and how women's studies as discipline affects that relationship.

The choice of Butler and Daly, whilst they are to some extent case studies of a general approach to feminist intellectual production which could be broadened out, is by no means arbitrary. An obvious reason for the choice of these feminists is the simple fact that they are rarely spoken of in the same breath. If we were to accept, momentarily, the kind of simplistic political histories and theoretical binaries which it is the intention of this thesis, partially, to refute, we could characterise Daly and Butler as fundamentally opposed in all sorts of ways. Not only are they read as belonging to two fundamentally disparate moments in feminist history and strands of feminist thought: they are also not uncommonly taken as *paradigmatic* of those trends. Such common-sense readings of these feminists will be explored in Chapters Two and Three, but you may be familiar with the following gloss: as a feminist coming to consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s, Daly developed a radical, politically lesbian, separatist feminism, tending to promote solidarity amongst women, but perhaps at the cost of blindness to differences *between* them, particularly those connected to ethnicity. Butler, meanwhile, came to prominence at the height of post-structuralism in the late-1980s and 1990s, and developed a concomitant concern with the linguistic construction of gender, problematisation of the sex/gender binary, and the exclusionary subtext of the categorisation 'women'; all of this assisted the development of greater political nuance, but perhaps at the expense of easy communication between the feminist movement and its more abstract intellectuals. Although I would immediately like to point out the simplifications, omissions, and downright untruths that make such a gloss possible (not to mention to tell you

all the interesting biographical and institutional similarities between their trajectories, and the differences of opportunity and context which help explain these intellectual paths more subtly), to begin with I was simply interested in how such stories about the feminist past come about. How and why do Butler and Daly come to take on these roles? What do these common-sense stories do to bolster the sense of a common past and future for feminism, not to mention a correct path for the discipline of women's studies? Indeed, how do disciplinary processes themselves feed into the production of a stable binary between these two currents and moments for feminism? Clare Hemmings has talked of an imagined 'newly engaged feminist heroine', one who takes the best from the history of feminism, and seeks to reconcile stark oppositions in a bright and balanced future: I am interested in the ways that the construction of this subject includes a negotiation of the supposed extremes of feminism embodied in Daly and Butler.³

Both Daly and Butler had difficulties with institutional structures and, although the reasons for such difficulties are very different in their respective cases, as are the avenues available for their negotiation of the problems, there are marked similarities between their trajectories when it comes to dealing with disciplines, and especially with women's studies. Although Butler clearly has greater academic and intellectual success than Daly in various ways (through institutional recognition, for instance: Daly's applications for professorship were always rejected, whilst Butler attained her chair at the age of thirty-four), they are nonetheless excluded from disciplines in similar ways.⁴ Daly is increasingly isolated from both mainstream theology and

³ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 105-07.

⁴ See Mary Daly, *Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage. Containing Recollections from my 'Logbook of a Radical Feminist Philosopher' (Being an Account of my Time/Space Travels and Ideas – Then, Again, Now and How)* (London: Women's Press, 1993), pp. 179-80; Judith Butler with Regina Michalik, 'The Desire for Philosophy: Interview with Judith Butler', *Lola*, 2 (2001) <http://www.lolapress.org/elec2/artenglish/butl_e.htm> [accessed 20 June 2012] (para. 29 of 35).

women's studies: she is an outsider who does not play by the rules of the disciplines. Meanwhile, Butler is quite consistently characterised as an intellectual dilettante who does not quite understand the numerous fields in which she dabbles: she adopts the *appearance* of discipline without the rigour. Irrespective of the more and less obvious differences between them, then, there are crucial similarities which can tell us something about the ways in which disciplines deal with feminist theory. For different reasons, there is a symbiotic process of exclusion and self-exclusion between both Butler and Daly and their original disciplines: they are rejected by significant sections of those fields, and come to reject the fields themselves as no longer an appropriate home for their work. Whilst we should certainly connect this to the general resistance to feminist insights in mainstream theology and philosophy, since there is a notable *mirroring* of this process in women's studies itself, this cannot be the whole story. Inevitably, disciplines discipline their practitioners, allowing some intellectual practices and excluding others, and women's studies should not be considered immune from this tendency. Many women's studies practitioners' dealings with Butler and Daly do not treat them as voices from within the discipline, but rather as figures from without: they are not regarded as interlocutors so much as interlopers. In turn, neither Butler nor Daly comes to understand herself as internal to the women's studies project, but rather as belonging to some broader intellectual space: the 'real world' of feminism for Daly, and an extra-disciplinary critical space for Butler.⁵ Through these processes of exclusion and self-exclusion, women's studies produces itself as a coherent intellectual space, and Butler and Daly as outside of such disciplinary coherence.

⁵ See, for example, Mary Daly, *Quintessence... Realizing the Archaic Future: Containing Cosmic Comments and Conversations with the Author* (London: Women's Press, 1999) p. 134; Judith Butler, 'Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity', *Critical Inquiry*, 35.4 (2009), 773-95 (p. 775).

Disciplinary and institutional conditions, I argue, are important, and often overlooked, contributing factors in the production of feminist knowledge. Women's studies as discipline (as will be examined in considerably more detail in Chapter Four, 'Academics, Intellectuals, Feminists') has specific effects on the production of feminist theory, and its reception both within and without its own disciplinary remit. Since the idea of women's studies has been and continues to be controversial, for reasons which are again discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, it is useful here to specify my use of the term. Firstly, I use the expression 'women's studies' rather than 'gender studies' because it has been, historically, the term used most consistently in both the UK and US institutional contexts. Beyond this point of historical usage, I have been influenced by Robyn Wiegman's recent argument against the constant corrective impulse which animates 'identity knowledges' such as gay and lesbian studies and women's studies. This impulse, which seeks to perfect disciplinary objects until they correspond unfailingly with social reality and a pure and just politics, is never sated, and in fact reproduces anxieties which are often not constructive. Wiegman's point is not that there should be no utopian drive in women's studies, but that the fixation on a full and proper *object* – in this case, 'gender' – which could settle once and for all the animating tensions of feminism, is an anxious forgetting of the ambiguities and lacunae which inhere in identity politics and, especially, their institutionalisation.⁶ Rather than seeking to correct the perceived failure of the

⁶ Particularly interesting is Wiegman's discussion of the current trend in academic feminism to address what has been called, somewhat awkwardly, 'homonationalism' or, even more awkwardly, 'sexularism'. This turn concerns itself with the complicity of gay, lesbian, and feminist movements in imperialist and Islamophobic projects, arguing that sections of these movements help to set up an image of the sexual and gendered liberation of Western democracies, as against the patriarchal and repressive regimes of Middle Eastern states. Whilst not dismissive of the extent to which feminism has been used for this purpose, Wiegman argues against the tendency of such critiques to focus on the *failure* of feminist, gay, and lesbian projects themselves, a tendency at once utopian and melancholic, and forgetful of the complexity and complicity of all identity politics. See Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (London: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 36-91. For 'homonationalism', see Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (London: Duke University Press, 2007); for

women's studies project, this understanding stays *within* the messiness and contradictions of the discipline.

Secondly, since I am understanding women's studies as an institutional formation, this should be understood as notably distinct from both the women's or feminist movement broadly conceived, *and* a mere conglomeration of feminists working in the academy. Rather, I understand women's studies to be a discipline: an intellectual and institutional space. It is important to bear in mind the dual institutional and intellectual character of disciplines, which cannot be reduced to their home in the academy, even whilst this home is what gives them their more recognisable formations, as James Chandler and Arnold Davidson point out:

To imagine disciplines as entirely separable from their institutional arrangements is to produce an overly idealized sense of what they are and how they function. At the same time, to imagine that disciplines are nothing more than their institutional arrangements is to deny the possibility that a disciplinary system can evolve beyond the structure – that of the academic departments, for example – that is meant to administer it.⁷

In the UK, for instance, women's studies no longer has a strong university presence, certainly as an autonomous discipline. The fact that the discipline maintains a professional association (the Feminist and Women's Studies Association UK and Ireland), however, suggests that the institutional setting of the discipline is not all that sustains it. Whilst the specifics of the institutional system give disciplines a particular character, and especially create the conditions for the more severe policing mechanisms associated with discipline (not least the capacity to set curricula, hire staff, and secure funding

'sexularism', Joan Wallach Scott's 'Sexularism: On Secularism and Gender Equality', in her *Fantasy of Feminist History* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 91-116.

⁷ James Chandler and Arnold I. Davidson, 'Introduction: Doctrines, Disciplines, Discourses, Departments', *Critical Inquiry*, 35.4 (2009), 729-46 (p. 734).

for some projects and not others), what is sustained beyond or at least in addition to these institutional configurations is intellectual community. Members of disciplines maintain a *communal* (if contested) sense of the work to be done, of the crucial questions, and of the useful orientations to knowledge. Whilst the US educational system, which is the focus of this thesis, still undoubtedly sustains a significant women's studies presence compared to that of the UK, it likewise maintains a specifically intellectual community of women's studies scholars.⁸ Indeed, Renate Duelli Klein and Gloria Bowles argue that this aspect of women's studies – its being a discipline of its own, with its own literature, methods, history, and community – often makes life rather hard for women's studies practitioners who are not in women's studies departments, since they must be conversant in two discrete traditions and literatures.⁹ Certainly, work published in women's studies journals, for instance, takes as common-place modes of analysis, stylistic traits, and points of reference which are quite distinct and require a particular disciplinary approach. It is crucial to acknowledge the disciplinary nature of women's studies, then, because it is an important means of regulation of feminist intellectual production. It is for this reason that I do not capitalise women's studies (as Women's Studies), since this rarely happens in reference to other disciplines, and so singles this one out as an exceptional endeavour.

⁸ In her account of the institutional and political forces which have shaped the development of women's studies as discipline in America, Ellen Messer-Davidow explains its proliferation in terms of the specifics of the American curriculum model. The modular structure of that curriculum, which discourages early specialism and instead requires disciplinary breadth for its undergraduate and even graduate students, means that even comparatively small universities develop what, by European standards, might be considered a very large number of one- and two-semester courses. Such a structure has encouraged small, often inter-disciplinary 'programs' to emerge, which do not offer full majors but do supply a number of elective modules. Messer-Davidow argues that women's studies' rather rapid success has partially been as a result of this structure: she notes that the number of such women's studies programmes increased from four to seventy-five between 1970 and 1973. See Ellen Messer-Davidow, *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 151-58.

⁹ Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein, 'Introduction: Theories of Women's Studies and the Autonomy/Integration Debate', in *Theories of Women's Studies*, ed. by Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 1-26 (p. 7); see also Eloise A. Buker, 'Is Women's Studies a Disciplinary or an Interdisciplinary Field of Inquiry?', *NWSA Journal*, 15.1 (2003), 73-93.

Irrespective of the extent to which I do make the case for a number of elements which mark women's studies out from more traditional disciplines, I nonetheless consider it to *be* a discipline, and we should no more single it out through capitalisation than place it in inverted commas.

Within the disciplinary field of women's studies and outside it, there is no shortage of literature on either Daly or Butler; however, what is attempted here is somewhat different. This secondary literature has tended to focus on these academics' intellectual works as independent from two further sets of considerations which are, instead, given equal weight here. Firstly, analyses of their writings tend to consider those works as acts of pure intellectual volition, rather than within their institutional context. Whilst the sociological contextualisation of intellectual labour is hardly new, Butler and Daly are nonetheless often treated as fully culpable for any limitations to be found within their work. Sometimes extremely damning criticisms of Daly are offered without any mention of the highly conservative disciplinary conditions she fought against, whilst Butler is likewise critiqued as if the specifics of her disciplinary training had had no effect on the 'choice' of a difficult writing style.¹⁰

The second set of considerations which has not been taken into account in the secondary literature on Butler and Daly, connected to the first but perhaps more controversial, is their more general personal biography. Although there are notable exceptions to the rule – Toril Moi's intricate tracing of the intellectual, historical, biographical, and literary conditions

¹⁰ For this tendency in responses to Daly, see, for example, Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, trans. by Elizabeth Guild (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp. 204-08; Meaghan Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, Reading, Postmodernism* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 27-50; for Butler, see, for example, Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler', *New Republic*, 220.8 (1999), pp. 37-45. These tendencies will be explored in considerably more depth in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

pertinent to Simone de Beauvoir's life and work, for instance¹¹ – feminists have, for good reason, tended to avoid all but passing reference to specific biography when assessing intellectual production. I do not mean to suggest that feminists have not been interested in the recovery of biographical details pertinent to women's intellectual production historically, but rather that the treatment of *recent and contemporary* feminist thinkers tends to take the form of purely intellectual engagement. Since feminists are often particularly conscious of the ways in which contextualisation of women's work can habitually mean a circumscription of that work within familiar if not conservative terms – Beauvoir reduced to her relationship with Sartre, Dworkin to her personal feelings about men – there are good reasons to avoid such biographical detail altogether. Whilst we clearly need to take extreme care when seeking to trace links between biography and intellectual work, however, and the latter should by no means be reduced to the translation of a life into the intellectual sphere, this thesis contends that holding personal biography in mind, *along with* broader institutional and intellectual conditions, and the substantive content of the works themselves, allows us to see some things which may otherwise be hidden. As the literary critic Lionel Trilling remarked in 1972, 'the day seems to have passed when the simple truth that criticism is not gossip requires to be enforced' by a 'chaste' dismissal of all biographical detail.¹²

With these gaps in the way we have tended to treat contemporary feminist theorists in mind, here I take Daly and Butler seriously as intellectuals, but trace the development of their thinking alongside a broad consideration of the disciplinary mechanisms of the institutional fields in which they have operated, and a narrower concentration on the social and

¹¹ Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹² Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 8.

historical conditions of their lives. As far as possible, I have tried to avoid separating out these three elements – the intellectual, the institutional, and the biographical – since they by no means apply discretely to or have easily separable effects upon either writing or life events. Instead, I take a more or less chronological approach to my subjects' trajectories, plotting their movements through educational systems and disciplinary fields over time. I try simultaneously to assess their own intellectual productions, critical receptions of that work in different disciplines, and autobiographical accounts of the conditions of its production, in order to build up a fuller picture of what is going on in the production of feminist theory than that which might otherwise be available to us, were we to concentrate on the products alone. This is something akin to what Bernard Lahire calls *folded sociology*. If macrosociology has tended to 'unfold' social life out from its concrete conditions in order to abstract 'structure' as its theoretical object, and microsociology has tended to be interested in some specific element of identity or social life (ethnicity, work, or school, for instance), then what is missing is a *full* account of some *specific* life. By folding the entirety of structure back down to a particular case, and yet taking into account as fully as possible the range of elements, identities, and roles which animate that person over time, we can, claims Lahire, develop a sociological account of *structure in context*.¹³

Autobiographical accounts of the processes of intellectual production are, then, important here: not only in as much as they give information about the specifics of those processes and the contexts in which they occurred, but also as opportunities taken by Butler and Daly to justify intellectual moves, clarify contentious points, and *position themselves*, sometimes in opposition to critical accounts of their works. This is certainly the case, I would argue, in Daly's 1993 autobiography *Outercourse*, and perhaps unsurprisingly there is

¹³ Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor*, trans. by David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), pp. 203-05 *et passim*.

no equivalent lengthy autobiographical tome by Butler. But we do not, in fact, have to look far to discover intellectual self-positionings of this type in Butler as well. In particular, both feminists have a tendency to write prefaces, especially to new editions of books, in which they produce precisely these kinds of justifications, clarifications, and self-positionings. In her preface to the 1999 re-issue of *Gender Trouble*, for instance, Butler makes a series of defences of the book from the sorts of criticisms with which the reader is no doubt familiar, and which will re-emerge throughout this thesis: that the book is not a work of feminism, that it is liable to appropriation by anti-feminist agendas, that it is irrelevant to the concerns of real women and, of course, that it is badly written.¹⁴ Interventions such as these prefaces are interesting here because we see the ways in which an intellectual work like *Gender Trouble* has been disciplined by its critics, and what strategies are available to writers in either refuting or counter-examining those critical moves. In a preface to 1993's *Bodies that Matter*, Butler somewhat facetiously compares certain critics of *Gender Trouble* to parents scolding an unruly child: 'But what about the materiality of the body, *Judy*?'¹⁵ These 'paratextual' elements allow writers to mediate between, contextualise, and position themselves, their critics, and to some extent their readers as well, so that we see in a particularly stark way the moves and counter-moves which condition a book and a writer's positionings in intellectual space.¹⁶

By examining a broader range of sources on feminist intellectuals – that is, not merely reading their intellectual products on the level of veracity or scholarship but *simultaneously* placing them within an institutional, social, and historical context – the thesis tries to avoid an excessively foundationalist

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. vii-xxxiii.

¹⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. ix (original emphasis).

¹⁶ See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 239-47.

or determinist analysis, and instead account for a continual dynamic between social context and individual decisions. This approach is by no means novel, but it does build upon, rather than merely applying, existing social theory. Specifically, the primary modes of analysis as well as the theoretical constructs which inform this thesis are those of Pierre Bourdieu, although in considerably modified form. In Chapter One, 'Re-Theorising Intellectual Production with Bourdieu', I engage with both Bourdieu's own work and that of a number of his critics, feminist and otherwise, in order to develop a broadly Bourdieusian social model which nonetheless breaks with certain of the more determinist aspects of his work. Irrespective of his general arguments to the contrary, here I argue that Bourdieu does not take up his model's potential to help us think social *change* as well as inertia, and to explain negotiation, strategy, and reflexivity at all levels of society and not only at the top.¹⁷

In order to take up this potential of the Bourdieusian model, I follow and develop the emphasis feminists, such as Lois McNay, have placed on the notion of *field*, as a component which should be given equal weight to those of *capital* and *habitus*.¹⁸ By showing how entrance into a field – in my study, the general field of intellectual production, and the sub-fields of academic disciplines – does not merely compel habitus to apply itself to the new field's terms, but instead can create opportunities for self-reflexivity and modification of habitus, this model seeks to understand habitus and field as in a dynamic relation of non-foundational symbiosis. The contextualisation of feminist intellectual production within institutional conditions such as disciplinary formations, as well as within the specific biographical

¹⁷ The capacity for a modified Bourdieusian theory to account for the reflexivity of agents, especially at lower social levels, has been developed recently by, for instance, Will Atkinson, 'Phenomenological Additions to the Bourdieusian Toolbox: Two Problems for Bourdieu, Two Solutions from Schutz', *Sociological Theory*, 28.1 (2010), 1-19; Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor*; and Nick Crossley, *Towards Relational Sociology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁸ See Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16.1 (1999), 95-117.

circumstances of that production, is not, then, a reduction of the specifically *intellectual* character of those works, but rather an attempt to make connections between the intellectual, the institutional, and the social.

This is, then, a critical reading of Bourdieu: as I hope will be made clear, he is not taken to have found the answer to social formations, but rather to have framed the questions in ways which seem to be useful. The terms *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* should not be understood as a bracketing off of the crucial sociological questions: they are taken to be expedient shorthands for complex social processes which nonetheless require substantial theorisation, elaboration, and contextualisation. As terms, they help us to explicate different factors feeding into a social situation, but we should remain conscious of their essentially pragmatic and constructed character. They are useful in as much as they help us to see social phenomena more clearly, not as catch-all descriptors of social life.¹⁹ And, as I again hope will be made clear throughout the thesis, the turn to Bourdieu does not constitute a turning *away* from critical or social-constructivist models (or, any port in a post-structuralist storm), but rather a nuancing of those very theories.²⁰

Whilst a number of feminists have shown the ways in which Bourdieu can prove useful for a feminist analysis (as we will see in the next chapter), what I take to be relatively novel is the addition of Bourdieu to the emerging field of critical feminist historiography. This scholarship has appeared on both sides of the Atlantic over the last ten years, developing a critique of stable and unproblematised chronologies of the feminist past, as well as simplistic schematisations of the sub-divisions of feminism (radical as against post-structuralist, for instance). This critical work has sought to unpack such

¹⁹ See Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 8-13.

²⁰ This point is also made in Julie McLeod, 'Feminists Re-Reading Bourdieu: Old Debates and New Questions about Gender Habitus and Gender Change', *Theory and Research in Education*, 3.11 (2005), 11-30 (pp. 25-26).

accepted truths, both in a corrective mode – hoping to disrupt and make more complex our sense of the past, and indeed the present, of feminism – and a more analytical one, attempting to understand the processes which feed into such stories.²¹ This is not merely feminism eating itself: if, as I argue here, women’s studies should be regarded as a discipline, with all the opportunities and constraints implied in that term, then a sign of its maturity is its ability to think critically about its politics, its practice, and its past. And this critical work also does important work to nuance feminist politics in the present: Clare Hemmings understands this historiography as a ‘concern [...] with the contested politics of the *present* over the “truth of the past”’.²² But although this very important analytical historiography often alludes to the significance of institutional constraints on the development of stable narratives about feminism, this is rarely pursued in much depth. By adding Bourdieusian insights, concerning the operations of disciplines as fields, for instance, we can come to a clearer understanding of how women’s studies as academic field produces opportunities and constraints for the production of feminist theory. And by taking note of *other* institutional conditions, such as the operations of the traditional disciplines, we can see the important intersections which demonstrate that feminist intellectual work is always produced in a context to some extent outside its own choosing.

This marriage of Bourdieu with feminist historiography creates a particularly critical orientation to the subject matter. By this I mean that the analysis remains committed to a desire to problematise accepted norms: not

²¹ For the corrective mode, see Sara Ahmed, ‘Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the “New Materialism”’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 15.1 (2008), 23-39; Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of US Feminism* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Jeska Rees, ‘A Look Back at Anger: The Women’s Liberation Movement in 1978’, *Women’s History Review*, 19.3 (2010), 337-56; for the analytical mode, see Clare Hemmings, ‘Telling Feminist Stories’, *Feminist Theory*, 6.2 (2005), 115-39, and *Why Stories Matter*; Wiegman, *Object Lessons*. This critical turn to the construction of feminist history appears to be gaining momentum amongst feminist academics: a recent event I attended at Goldsmiths College, ‘Feminist Genealogies’, organised by Sara Ahmed, was advertised as a workshop, but was forced to move to a large lecture hall in order to accommodate the number of attendees.

²² Hemmings, ‘Telling Feminist Stories’, p. 118 (my emphasis).

only of feminist history, but also of the nature of institutions and their effects on subjects. Whilst the Bourdieusian insistence on the importance of contextualisation makes this to some extent a sociological orientation, it remains committed to the *critical* tradition in sociology. The modifications to Bourdieu's social model, which I discuss in the following chapter, along with the constructivist orientation to our stories about feminist intellectual production which I take from feminist historiography, produce a focus on the ways in which social forces *interact* with subjectivity, so that there is always the potential to imagine a different form of interaction, a different negotiation of a situation. Critical intellectual work, in this sense, remains committed to the potential for change even though it also focuses on structures of domination.

Institutional, biographical, and historical considerations are central, but so too are the ways in which individuals themselves make sense of those conditions. Daly and Butler are by no means products of circumstance, but create strategies for negotiating those circumstances. This potential for strategising is not infinite but is not fully determined either, a point which sociologist Nick Crossley has recently made strikingly:

agency and structure are effectively co-existing aspects of the social world which assume greater or lesser salience in different contexts. We cannot resolve this dichotomy because there is nothing to resolve or at least nothing that can be resolved in general. The job of sociology [...], I suggest, is to examine how, paraphrasing Marx, inter-actors make history (agency) but not in circumstances of their choosing (structure). There is not much else to be said regarding structure and agency than this.²³

Whilst the final sentence may seem a little hyperbolic, the point to be taken is that when we look at any particular *case*, we find the intricate symbiosis of

²³ Crossley, *Towards Relational Sociology*, p. 5.

agency and its social contexts. This is not necessarily the resolution of a great dichotomy but simply an observation that people do indeed make decisions, but within a context which does not allow an infinite number of options, and in which some options are easier to take than others. As in Lahire's method of folded sociology discussed above, by focusing on particular cases, we see clearly the intimacy of these elements in practice. And by showing precisely which strategies have been taken in those cases and interrogating the conditions of such choices, we can look to new potential strategies for negotiating similar conditions. In particular, I argue in the final chapter that fully supporting the discipline of women's studies, with all its messiness, tensions, and contradictions, is a potentially fruitful way of negotiating the kinds of problems that Daly and Butler, and no doubt many other feminist academics as well, have encountered through their dealings with institutional structures. It is by offering these kinds of potential negotiations of structures that the thesis remains critical, in the sense of both opposed to systems of domination and hopeful for change.

In order to get to this point of developing a potential strategy for feminist intellectual producers, the thesis progresses through three types of chapter: a theoretical one setting up a model for the analyses to follow, two chapters applying that model to my case studies, and finally an analytical one which outlines the potential strategy. Whilst this approach to the material may initially give the impression that the development of the theoretical model preceded the analysis of the case studies, understood, perhaps, as subsequent *application*, in fact the processes happened co-extensively and built upon each other. It would certainly be disingenuous to suggest that I approached the material on Butler and Daly without a theoretical and political orientation half-conceived in my own mind, and subsequently developed or appropriated a model to explain what I had 'discovered'. Nonetheless, the broadly

Bourdieuian orientations with which I began the project were consistently challenged by the specifics of Butler's and Daly's biographies and, especially, what they had to say about their experiences. Attempts to shoe-horn Daly and Butler into Bourdieu, to use a particularly unappealing metaphor, simply had to be abandoned early on.

This is what necessitates the theoretical excursion of the first chapter, 'Re-Theorising Intellectual Production with Bourdieu': as a preliminary chapter, this section sets up in some detail the ways in which Bourdieu is being used – and the ways in which he is not. As has already been intimated, a number of modifications to Bourdieu's social model are suggested, developed through engagement with his own work as well as that of his critics and appropriators, feminist and otherwise. In particular, this chapter suggests a symbiotic relation between habitus and field, in which habitus is not merely reproduced in the new fields in which it finds itself, but instead often finds itself challenged to adapt to those new conditions. That is, habitus is not determined by early life experiences, but, by responding to new social contexts, can be shown to modify itself and, in particular, react to those changing conditions with self-reflexivity and strategy. In turn, fields themselves are changed by new entrants, and new hierarchies and relations between individuals emerge as a result of the different orientations to the field new entrants often have. Understanding these processes as symbiotic makes sense of social change without denying the difficulties individuals face in new social contexts. The chapter ends by illustrating this relation between habitus and field through a brief sketch of Daly's and Butler's relations to the discipline of women's studies, and so opening up the thesis to the case studies which constitute its central section.

The second chapter, 'Alienation by Degrees', looks in depth at the biography, intellectual works, and reception of feminist theologian Mary Daly.

Although a reasonable amount has been written on Daly, often from a feminist and critical perspective, I have found little which mentions the quite exceptional nature of her educational experiences (despite Daly's own readiness to impart the information, even on the back covers of her books).²⁴ A first-generation university student from a broadly working-class Irish Catholic milieu in New York State, she was an exceptional educational success. Funding herself through teaching contracts and grants from philanthropic organisations and progressive bishops, she accumulated six degrees, three of them doctorates. Since she wished to pursue a PhD in sacred theology (the highest Catholic theological degree) at a Catholic institution, but the only American university in the 1950s able to award the degree did not respond to her application, she took advantage of progressive European anti-discrimination laws, and took up the degree at a Swiss Catholic university at which she was nonetheless far from welcome. She became the first woman in the world to attain this degree from a Catholic institution. As I argue in the second chapter, this quite remarkable set of achievements from a female, first-generation university student in the 1950s and 1960s is not incidental to the subsequent development of Daly's theological and feminist thought, but should be taken seriously as a contributing factor to that development.

Daly's early *hyper-identification* with institutional educational structures is, I argue, connected to a family background which was not familiar with the social *meaning* of university qualifications: for Bourdieu, such qualifications are often implicitly subordinate to a more general cultural and social capital in the field of intellectual production. On this reading,

²⁴ See, for example, the author description on Daly's final book, *Amazon Grace: Re-Calling the Courage to Sin Big* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), which notes that she 'holds doctorates in theology and philosophy from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland'. An exception to the general tendency to overlook the biographical details of Daly's life is contained in personal correspondence between Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde, in which the former asks Lorde to take into account the specificity of Daly's classed experiences when trying to come to terms with their intellectual and political differences; cited in Alexis De Veaux, *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde* (New York: Morton, 2004), p. 248.

scholastic qualifications are often given undue weight by those for whom they are a primary means of capital: such individuals *misrecognise* the varied and often not strictly academic considerations which govern positions in the intellectual field. Such individuals are thus likely to feel loyalty and affiliation with those structures which have provided them the facility to 'move up'.²⁵ It is with this hyper-identification in mind that we should understand the disjuncture felt by Daly when confronted with the extremely negative and censorious response from the theological establishment upon the publication of her first book. This is a disjuncture between habitus which identifies extremely closely with educational structures, and the experiential reality of a conservative disciplinary field. This moment of extreme intellectual vulnerability for Daly is also a source of reflexivity, and she goes on to develop a style which is at once more autonomous from disciplinary structures, and increasingly defensive and insular. The change in style should be understood as a *strategy* for dealing with a situation conditioned by the interplay of habitus and field, then, and not as pure intellectual volition or the inevitable consequence of a particular classed relationship to intellectual production. The chapter goes on to argue that this early experience also affected Daly's subsequent relationship to women's studies: she increasingly positioned herself outside the dialogue of academic feminism (which she came to understand as tokenistic and unconnected to the *real* movement), through an extremely idiosyncratic writing style, often read as wilfully self-indulgent, and an insistence that she was not of the *time* of contemporary feminism. Such self-exclusions are mirrored in the women's studies field itself, which tends to place Daly as spatially outside and temporally behind the contemporary

²⁵ See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, 'The School as a Conservative Force: Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities', trans. by J. C. Whitehouse, in *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education: A Selection of Contemporary Research Papers Together with Some of the Formative Writings of the Recent Past*, ed. by John Eggleston (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 32-46 (p. 34).

conversation. Here the interplay of habitus and field again produces specific opportunities and limitations for the production of feminist intellectual work.

In the third chapter, ‘Judith the Obscure’, we turn to feminist philosopher Judith Butler, whose travels through fields and treatment within them is both similar to and different from Daly’s. Here, I argue that habitus conditioned in a broadly middle-class milieu and through a conventionally elite education – through training in continental philosophy at Bennington, a prestigious liberal arts college, at Yale, and under Hans Georg Gadamer in Germany – produces different opportunities for negotiating apparently similar difficulties in institutional structures to Daly’s. There is an ambivalence here: Butler is at once a very successful *intellectual*, and also frequently derided as a bad *academic*. Perhaps even more so than Daly, Butler has been positioned, often quite vociferously, as external to the disciplinary fields which she has sought to enter, and what is policed here is not the boundary of the field of intellectual production broadly conceived, but rather the disciplines as protected areas of institutional and intellectual space.

Despite the differences between these attempts to externalise Butler from different disciplines, what almost always emerges is an accusation of inauthenticity: Butler appears to be doing the discipline, but in fact she is doing something slightly different. This familiar argument, which my conference acquaintance at the beginning of this introduction offered quite straightforwardly regarding one of our most successful contemporary feminist academics, is one of the surest ways a discipline has to police its boundaries, and it is this type of disciplining to which Butler has often been susceptible. In Martha Nussbaum’s famous polemic against her, ‘The Professor of Parody’, Butler is criticised as not really a philosopher, not really a feminist, and not really interested in real women; in Denis Dutton’s writings around his Bad Writing Prize offered to Butler, he alludes to the similarity between

‘pretentious’ academic writing and kitsch, which ‘declares itself “profound” or “moving” not by displaying its own intrinsic value but by borrowing these values from elsewhere’.²⁶ Although we might expect such disciplining practices to result in the kind of intellectual defensiveness and insularity we find in the later Daly, the result is actually an opening out from disciplinary circumscription and toward a, broadly successful, role as a public and general intellectual. Butler has been able to convert her accumulated academic capital into a general intellectual capital and, although she is still criticised for her apparent inability to observe academic and disciplinary mores, her broad success as an *intellectual* means she need not resort to defensive strategies to deal with this.²⁷ Rather, differences of habitus, and to some extent field as well, mean that the strategies available for Butler in a similar set of situations to Daly’s are different, and can probably be considered more successful.

After these accounts of the differences in biography and institutional conditions in Daly’s and Butler’s cases, and subsequent differences in potential strategies available to them, the thesis turns finally to a comparative account of their dealings with women’s studies specifically, in the chapter ‘Academics, Intellectuals, Feminists’. Since both Butler and Daly self-identified as feminist and remained within the university system, we might think that women’s studies would be a logical home for them, especially in the American context, where the discipline still has a relatively large university presence. Not only has neither Butler nor Daly found an *institutional* home in women’s studies: I argue that they have not found intellectual homes in the

²⁶ Nussbaum, ‘The Professor of Parody’, pp. 37-38; 40; Denis Dutton, ‘Language Crimes: A Lesson in How Not to Write, Courtesy of the Professoriate’, *Wall Street Journal*, 5 February 1999 <http://denisdutton.com/language_crimes.htm> [accessed 28 May 2010] (para. 10 of 11).

²⁷ In the recent controversy over the City of Frankfurt’s granting of the Adorno Prize for humanities scholarship to Butler, for instance, a number of negative comments have been directed specifically at the alleged superficiality and non-scholarliness of her works: see, for instance, Kenan Malik’s blog post, ‘Intellectual Charlatans and Academic Witch-Hunters’, *Pandaemonium: Writings, Readings, Thoughts & Scribbles* (2012) <<http://kenanmalik.wordpress.com/2012/09/03/intellectual-charlatans-academic-witch-hunters/>> [accessed 28 February 2013]. Clearly, this has not stopped Butler being awarded this and other prestigious prizes for her intellectual work.

discipline either. In this final chapter, I examine why this has been the case; through the case studies of Daly and Butler, I look at some of the tensions and contradictions which make women's studies a difficult intellectual space for some feminists; and, finally, make an argument for the use of staying within such contradictions, as a way of imagining a fruitful way for feminists to negotiate the kinds of institutional conditions which Butler and Daly experienced.

Here I argue that both Daly and Butler, in different ways according to the options available to them, have moved from a generally academic conception of their work, toward an *intellectual* self-conception. Both move away from a sense of disciplinary circumscription, coming to understand themselves as beyond or at least slightly to the side of such institutional constraints. In line with the general direction of the thesis, such moves are understood as negotiations of concrete conditions and not as purely volitional decisions; but, nonetheless, the final argument is that feminist academics do often have the option to engage with women's studies as discipline, as an alternative strategy to those Butler and Daly took. In this conceptualisation of women's studies, the discipline emerges as a site for the production of work which can be considered intellectual (politically engaged, for instance, and in conversation with a broad, non-specialist audience) *and* academic, if we understand that term to mean within disciplinary bounds and institutionally supported. When women's studies practitioners understand Butler or Daly to be outside the domain of their intellectual space, just as when those feminists consider themselves to be outside such disciplinary circumscription, they do not take the difficult option of maintaining the more open and complex space which women's studies has the potential to be.

The general argument of the thesis is that intellectual production must be contextualised within institutional and broader social conditions: not in

order to reduce it to such conditions, but conversely to show the full complexity of the interrelation between the social, the institutional, the personal, and the intellectual. Whilst trying not to lose sight of the agential element in all decisions, the thesis seeks to understand that agency as a *negotiation* of concrete conditions. Agency and structure, habitus and field, are not polarities, but mutually constitutive elements in any particular situation, and by looking in depth at specific cases, we see the extent of that symbiosis. The argument is certainly not, in that case, that Daly and Butler negotiated their situations incorrectly or *should have* behaved differently; but rather that, through an examination of such cases, we ourselves as feminist academics can feel more at home with types of institutional negotiation with which Butler and Daly did not.

Ch. 1

Re-Theorising Intellectual Production with Bourdieu

Symbiotic Relations between Habitus and Field

To proclaim 'I am a bourgeois intellectual, I am a slimy rat!' as Sartre liked to do, is devoid of implications. But to say 'I am an assistant professor at Grenoble and I am speaking to a Parisian professor' is to force oneself to ask whether it is not the relation between these two positions that is speaking through my mouth.

Pierre Bourdieu¹

In the case studies of feminist intellectuals Mary Daly and Judith Butler which follow in Chapters Two and Three, we will see how the institutional setting creates particular conditions for the production of feminist theory. We will look, in particular, at how the mechanisms of academic disciplines create limitations and constraints for individual intellectual producers. But we will also see how both Daly and Butler are able to negotiate those conditions, albeit in different ways and with different levels of success. According to the interpretation developed in those chapters, disciplines and other institutional factors act as crucial mediators in the process of intellectual production, and, in turn, intellectual producers come to develop more or less faithful or heretical approaches to the institutions of formalised knowledge.

What these accounts will point toward is the symbiotic nature of the relation between feminist theorists and their institutional contexts: through continual interaction, both elements change over time. Such social processes require theorising, and in this chapter I argue that it is through a modification of Pierre Bourdieu's model of habitus, capital, and field that we can come to a useful understanding of them. In particular, I argue that when we take the

¹ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), pp. 193-94.

concept of field seriously as a sociological element capable of significantly modifying social processes, contexts, and individual habitus, we begin to see how Bourdieu can prove especially useful for a critical and feminist approach to intellectual production.

For a number of feminists, the work of Bourdieu has proven to be a particularly useful theoretical springboard or methodological frame for research. At the same time, many of the same feminists have expressed misgivings about aspects of his model, or about his own application of his ideas, especially in relation to his treatment of women. In this chapter I will explain and, for the most part, endorse a series of criticisms which feminists and others have levelled against Bourdieu, before going on to explicate my understanding of his usefulness for my own project. Through the work of these feminists, but also by developing my own modifications of the Bourdieusian model, I explain how the concepts of habitus and field, when understood as equal and mutually constitutive elements in any situation, help us understand the specific intellectual strategies taken by Daly and Butler. In particular, I argue that Bourdieu's model helps explain these feminists' trajectories within and across disciplines: by understanding such disciplines as fields, and the tendencies and beliefs of individuals as habitus, we can get to a theoretical account of disciplinary movement as always bound up with both social context and intellectual agency.

I begin by introducing the concept of field and examining its suitability for theorising disciplines as social spaces. By understanding disciplines in this Bourdieusian sense, we can get to an understanding of how habitus (a subject's set of embodied dispositions and perceptual schemata) and field (a specific social context in which particular individuals compete for recognition and power) continually interact in the production of intellectual work and its reception. Next, I look at Bourdieu's tendency to under-utilise the concept of

field, despite his insistence that it must remain central, and connect this problem to a broader series of criticisms which have stressed his tendency to emphasise stasis in social life, at the expense of accounting for social change. Here I argue that retaining field as a crucial component in the analysis to some extent mitigates these problems, since it allows for a more complex and dynamic picture of social life, and demonstrate this by showing the centrality of field in my account of a specific episode in Mary Daly's trajectory. Without field playing a central role here, we could not adequately account for the intellectual changes which Daly undergoes at this point: it is the *disjuncture* between habitus and field which allows for development and change. Turning then to women's studies specifically as a field, I recount several criticisms which have been levelled against Bourdieu by feminists and, being in general agreement with these claims, again try to show how modifications of the Bourdieusian model can lead to potentially more fruitful applications. Through a more sustained account of Butler's and Daly's trajectories within women's studies, I argue finally for a more fluid account of intellectual production and capital accrual which nonetheless takes account of the constraints placed on producers, and again for the importance of a Bourdieusian conception of field for such an analysis.

At times, the problems with Bourdieu outlined and developed below may seem so forceful that we may wonder quite why feminists have held on to his ideas at all. The answer, as we will see, is that the fundamental constructs of habitus, capital, and field, when treated as *equal* elements in analysis, offer a way of conceptualising social change and agency within and against social structures of domination which are, nonetheless, deeply ingrained, embodied, and inclined toward inertia. As the case studies in this thesis demonstrate, the relations between habitus and field are intricate and dynamic, and in order to theorise adequately the full complexity of this reality, it is necessary to take

Bourdieu's critics seriously and to reformulate a number of his ideas. That Bourdieu, as I will argue below, sometimes fails in his concrete analyses to think through the real implications of the theoretical equality of habitus and field, and often concentrates on social continuity at the expense of social change, is not necessarily a reason to jettison the model. This is not to assert that somehow what Bourdieu says he is doing (thinking agency and structure equally) is more important than the conclusions he reaches in his empirical work – as should be clear in the criticism below – but rather that, as Will Atkinson puts it (echoing the title of a Terry Lovell essay), 'to think *with* Bourdieu necessitates thinking *beyond* and even *against* Bourdieu.'²

DISCIPLINES AS FIELDS

Bourdieu's sociology can be said to hinge on three theoretical constructs: habitus, capital, and field. Where habitus, as a set of embodied dispositions and a practical sense of the social world, and capital, as the social, cultural, and economic resources upon which an individual may be able to draw in a given social situation, are very widely understood and utilised in a variety of academic disciplines, the specifically Bourdieusian notion of field has perhaps gained relatively little currency. Bourdieu's apparent reluctance to treat field as an equal component in his analyses, and the subsequent ineffectualness of the term in some instances, to which a number of critics have pointed, and which we will discuss below, may be one reason that field has not always been recognised as crucial to Bourdieusian analysis. However, it may be that, by

² Will Atkinson, 'Phenomenological Additions to the Bourdieusian Toolbox: Two Problems for Bourdieu, Two Solutions from Schutz', *Sociological Theory*, 28.1 (2010), 1-19 (p. 16; original emphases). The reference is to Terry Lovell, 'Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu', *Feminist Theory*, 1.1 (2000), 11-32. In his critique of 'servile disciples' of Bourdieu, Bernard Lahire notes that 'those most faithful to Pierre Bourdieu's work are not [...] where people are generally in the habit of seeing them': that is, *challenging* the master is much more in the Bourdieusian spirit than the mere application of his ideas. See Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor*, trans. by David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), p. ix.

affording field the significance it did not always retain in his own work, the real usefulness of Bourdieu for feminist analysis can be determined.

A field, for Bourdieu, is a social space identifiable through the make-up of the capital of those invested in it. The intellectual field, for instance, is constituted of agents sufficiently endowed with the institutionalised cultural capital – academic titles, for instance – as well as the *general* cultural capital needed to be taken seriously as a commentator on intellectual matters and a player in intellectual games.³ The position an agent takes in the field is conditioned by the specific make-up of their capital: purely institutionalised capital, for instance – scholastic merits and academic qualifications in the intellectual field – tends to be subordinate to a general cultural capital, which is largely dependent on class.⁴ The concept of field allows us to think about social change as well as inertia because a field is a site of (limited) struggle: struggle to determine its limits as well as its inhabitants. Loïc Wacquant describes it as ‘a battlefield, a structured arena within which agents, because they carry different potentials and have different positions and proclivities, struggle to (re)define the very structure and boundaries of the field’.⁵ Because of the variety and complexity of the agents and types of capital existing in a field like that of intellectual production, there is space for *negotiation* of the field: for different types of strategies in different situations which may be more or less successful; and because new participants, with different levels of capital, enter fields, those sites themselves are dynamic. Field and habitus are therefore in a continual process of mutual formation, and understanding them in this way allows us to account for intellectual innovation and strategy in the context of academic structures, such as disciplines, which also constrict such

³ See Pierre Bourdieu with Loïc J. D. Wacquant, ‘For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals: On *Homo Academicus*’, trans. by Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 34 (1989), 1-29 (pp. 5-9).

⁴ On this point, which Bourdieu has developed in many of his works in the sociology of academia and of education, see, for example, *Homo Academicus*, trans. by Peter Collier (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), pp. 194-225.

⁵ Bourdieu with Wacquant, ‘For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals’, p. 8.

flow. Over time, the wrangles and flux which in part characterise fields can even give rise to new fields and sub-fields. In the context of this thesis, we can see women's studies' emergence in the early 1970s in the US and a little later in the UK, at least partially, as the result of the difficulties which feminists had in introducing gender analysis to traditional disciplinary fields. Disputes over the proper content of fields eventually led to the emergence of a *new* type of discipline, which both asserted its independence from those original fields and remained in complex relation to them. Fields are by no means static, then, and it is this mutability of field along with the responses of habitus to new fields which makes social change possible.⁶

Bourdieu argues that academic disciplines are not identical to one another and so exert different sorts of effects on individuals. Disciplines, like all fields, should be understood simultaneously within the specificity of their own relatively autonomous rules, norms, and circumscriptions, and within the broader field of power of which they form a part. In his epilogue to *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, for instance, Bourdieu argues that academic fields are marked in particular by the fact that participants are often simultaneously producers *and* consumers. Unlike, for instance, the literary field, in which producers create works for a largely external market, academic fields are spaces in which works are created for a rarefied market of consumers, who are often themselves also creators of intellectual products. This relatively insular nature means that for Bourdieu these fields tend to produce a culture relatively autonomous from state power, in which the principle of valuation is transferred from desire for power to desire for knowledge (the form of power specific to the field). To some extent an ideal conception of academic struggle, most attainable in the pure sciences whose products are least likely to be useful in political struggle and whose principles

⁶ See Chapter Four for further discussion of this factor in the emergence of women's studies.

of valuation can be reserved for specialists (that is, who maintain relative insularity and thereby autonomy), this potential for autonomy is understood as unevenly attainable for different academic fields. Sociology, for instance, although ideally autonomous from political structures on Bourdieu's understanding, in reality tends to be contaminated by state power because its objects as well as its products lend themselves to use in wider political struggle.⁷ Academic fields, then, do not operate identically, but exert different types of force on individuals, and have a more significant effect on intellectual productions than merely insisting that they be expressed in terms appropriate to the field.

Before we look at precisely how the Bourdieusian concept of field allows for limited agency, it is important to note Bourdieu's own tendency to state the importance of field whilst simultaneously seeming to under-utilise it. For whilst, if the concept really were as important as habitus and capital, we would expect the field to have notable effects on the behaviour and beliefs of agents, in Bourdieu we often find that, in different fields, behaviour is merely a 'euphemised' form of itself. This is to say that the only effect that field appears to have is to force habitus to express itself in terms appropriate to the field. For instance, in his study of Martin Heidegger, Bourdieu sets out to enact a dual reading in which the effects of both the political and the philosophical fields on the existentialist's writing are considered at once; yet throughout the work, Bourdieu seems to suggest that the only effect that the philosophical field, for instance, exerts on Heidegger's positions is one of form. His philosophical contentions are thus merely euphemised and sublimated variants of his political sympathies (for National Socialism), which in turn are

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Epilogue: On the Possibility of a Field of World Sociology', trans. by Loïc J. D. Wacquant, in *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, ed. by Pierre Bourdieu and James S. Coleman (Oxford: Westview, 1991), pp. 373-78 (p. 375).

euphemised expressions of his socio-economic position – habitus remains, unchanged, at the root of action in any field.⁸

Jeremy Lane relates this tendency to Bourdieu's problematic notion of homology. Bourdieu characterises homology as 'diversity within homogeneity': that is, similar habitus may be *expressed* in diverse ways, but at root there is a fundamental uniformity across fields.⁹ The concept stresses the *appearance* of difference, beneath which are concealed underlying similarities between positions in different fields, discovered through analysis. This notion has been problematic for feminists, for instance, because it does not allow for the ambivalence that their research shows women expressing when entering new fields: it does not adequately account for the *felt strangeness* of entering a field for which one's habitus was not 'designed', nor for the potential subversion of habitus' conservatism that this might facilitate.¹⁰ (This is not to say that Bourdieu does not at least discuss the possibility of such subversion elsewhere.) Far from easily adopting roles which are homologous to their positions in other domains, women entering new fields often find that they are in entirely different sections of social space, and that this difference creates the potential for informed reflection and even adaptations of fields. Bridget Fowler, for instance, discusses the potential for women to subvert the literary field upon their substantial entrance into it in the twentieth century: their relative outsidership, that is their 'non-native' relation to the field, facilitated a partial rejection of the notion of 'art for art's sake', which had consequences for the field as a whole.¹¹ By contrast, in a study of French university students in the 1960s, Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron seem to stress the homology

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, trans. by Peter Collier (Oxford: Polity, 1991); see, for example, the section 'Censorship and the Imposition of Form', pp. 70-87.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 60.

¹⁰ Jeremy F. Lane, *Bourdieu's Politics: Problems and Possibilities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 103-08.

¹¹ Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 138-41.

of women's behaviour in the educational field to general 'feminine traits'. On their analysis, female philosophy students are more likely to attempt to organise social gatherings, in distinction to their male counterparts' commitments to fantasies of the autonomous and miserable intellectual (they '*transpose* the task of organizing exchanges, which is characteristic of women's traditional role, into the university role'); and are also likely to develop political views homologous to the traditional female virtues of sacrifice, duty, and care.¹² In contrast to Fowler's account of the dynamic interplay of habitus and field, which produces significant modifications to both elements, here field appears to have only the most superficial of effects.

BOURDIEU, AGENCY, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In this tendency to under-use field, or to treat it as an element which does not significantly affect the possibilities available to agents, Bourdieu tends to stress the static and inert qualities of social life. One of the most often stated criticisms of Bourdieu is the extent to which he fails to account for social change, instead positing something like a determinist model in which habitus and social reality, as 'two translations of the same sentence', are perfect reflections.¹³ Habitus draws upon the same old resources in order to fit with a new social context: it is not itself significantly affected by the potential novelty or strangeness of that context or any felt lack of fit with it; nor is field significantly changed by new agents bringing novel orientations. On such a reading, it is difficult to see how women (or any dominated group) can effect

¹² Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture*, trans. by Richard Nice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 36 (my emphasis); 61.

¹³ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 105.

change in the world; equally problematic is this model's inability to theorise how the dominated come to be aware of their domination.

Bourdieu sometimes insists that this determinist model only holds good for the doxic relation to the world: that is, for consciousness which has come into substantive contact with neither heterodox opinion nor different ways of organising the social world, and therefore accepts its common-sense worldview unreflectively. He discusses doxic habitus, in particular, in relation to the Kabyle, a Berber people in Algeria on whom he conducted early ethnographic work.¹⁴ However, the distinction between doxic and non-doxic relations to the world is sometimes unclear. As Terry Lovell has pointed out, a criticism which is so often repeated is unlikely to be the product of a simple misreading;¹⁵ and so, whilst it would be wrong to suggest that Bourdieu never accounts for social change (and even more so to claim that Bourdieu's ideas, suitably adapted, cannot be useful for a theory of social change which is careful to take account of the inertia of social life), nonetheless the accusation must be considered by feminists wishing to use Bourdieu. In particular, since we will see that both feminists used as case studies in subsequent chapters adapt considerably, both to new fields and to mutations of fields, it is crucial to show how habitus and field are able to work in less static and more dynamic ways.

For feminists, one of the most problematic contentions of Bourdieu's is that androcentric conceptions of femininity and masculinity, irrespective of any number of social, economic, and cultural changes in the roles of men and women, have endured at some level of consciousness for thousands of years. Rationalising his decision to use his anthropological work from the 1950s and

¹⁴ See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 172-76.

¹⁵ Terry Lovell, 'Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu', p. 32.

1960s on the Kabyle to illustrate the continuity of traditional gender norms in his *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu asserts that

Ethnological description of a social world that is both sufficiently remote to lend itself more easily to objectification and entirely constructed around masculine domination acts as a kind of ‘detector’ of the infinitesimal traces and scattered fragments of the androcentric worldview and, consequently, as the instrument of an archaeological history of the unconscious which, having no doubt been originally constructed in a very ancient and very archaic state of our societies, inhabits each of us, whether man or woman. (It is therefore a historical unconscious, linked not to a biological or psychological nature [...] but to a specifically historical labour of construction [...] and one which can consequently be modified by a transformation of its historical conditions of production.)¹⁶

The parenthetical nod to the role of historical conditions in this formulation probably does not do enough work to dispel the reader’s uneasiness when faced with an ‘archaic’ society presented as a more primitive variant of Western androcentrism (not to mention the specific problems associated with the use of an Islamic culture to make such a point). As elsewhere in his discussions of the potential for (and existence of) social change, Bourdieu makes the claim for the possibility of a break with old orders, yet in his own analyses seems far more interested in the continuous, even static, side of social life. In *The Inheritors*, for instance, he makes the argument that working-class and petit-bourgeois cultural and educational aspiration will only ever push bourgeois distinction to greater levels: ‘In short, what the competitive struggle makes everlasting is not different positions, but the difference between

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 54.

positions.¹⁷ And yet many feminist analyses, as we will see, have documented the complex processes of adaptation and change which occur in many contexts. In the next chapter, we will see how Mary Daly, the first woman to attain a doctorate in sacred theology, was able to affect the Catholic theological field, sometimes in quite profound ways: whilst the changes are certainly ambiguous, and continue to be resisted, it cannot be claimed that her entry into that field did not effect significant and lasting reform. A concentration on social continuity may have the political consequence of simply reproducing, and indeed reinforcing, contingent processes of domination, by stressing, as Bourdieu repeatedly does, that ‘everything proceeds as if’ social structures were constant.

This tendency to concentrate on social continuity and to minimise, or even discount, the importance of social innovation, may be connected to the fact that, for Bourdieu, the task of analysis is not to uncover the root cause or fundamental meaning of social structures, but to document them accurately as they currently stand in order to ascertain the nature of inequality and so provide intellectual backing for strategies to redistribute capital.¹⁸ In this he takes his distance, he claims, from the critical tradition in sociology, that is from analyses seeking to reveal ideology or to make moral claims about social structures.¹⁹ This descriptive function for the sociologist, taking its cue perhaps from a structuralist tendency to reveal patterns but not seek to assert underlying reasons for them, can produce work which takes seriously the full extent of social stratification, but nonetheless sometimes frustrates feminists and others who begin from the contention that understanding *why* particular

¹⁷ Bourdieu and Passeron, *The Inheritors*, p. 96.

¹⁸ In the course of a radio interview featured in the documentary *Sociology Is a Martial Art*, Bourdieu begins a rhetorical question with ‘why...?’ only to correct himself: ‘By “why...?” I mean “how is it that...?”’. The question of *why* particular forms of social domination emerge in the deepest and, as he puts it, ‘metaphysical’ sense, is replaced with what he considers the concrete and properly sociological question of social *processes* and effects. See *Sociology Is a Martial Art*, dir. by Pierre Carles (CP Productions, 2001).

¹⁹ Bourdieu with Wacquant, ‘For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals’, pp. 18-19.

systems of domination emerge is a crucial element in transforming them. Just as feminists, most influentially Gayle Rubin, have taken Claude Lévi-Strauss to task for positing the ‘exchange’ of women as fundamental to the emergence of culture without asking crucial questions about *why* this should be fundamental and why it is women that circulate and not men (both Freud and Lévi-Strauss ‘see neither the implications of what they are saying, nor the implicit critique which their work can generate when subjected to a feminist eye’),²⁰ so Bourdieu can be criticised for his reluctance to address his subjects with an eye to *why* particular social structures emerge. Avoiding these critical questions, and instead documenting the extent of both social inertia and domination, is one of the contributing factors to Bourdieu’s appearance as a theorist who reinforces, rather than substantively challenging, those conditions.

This is one of the points which, in a slightly different context, Jacques Rancière makes to counter Bourdieu’s sociological project more broadly. For Rancière, there are a series of fundamental problems at the root of Bourdieu’s system as well as the sociological discipline more generally. (Rancière refers to him as ‘the sociologist’ throughout the chapter in *The Philosopher and His Poor* which deals with Bourdieu, and it is not always easy to discern where he is speaking specifically of Bourdieu and where of sociology in general.) On this reading, Bourdieu’s continual stress on the embodied and internalised effects of domination, rather than the potential for agency or resistance, is a result of the circularity of his methods: he enters the research scene with a set of ready-made opinions already considered

²⁰ Gayle Rubin, ‘The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex’, in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. by Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review, 1975), pp. 157–210 (p. 159). Rubin is critiquing Lévi-Strauss’s ideas in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, ed. by Rodney Needham, trans. by James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon, 1969).

attributable to a particular social group, and always finds precisely what he is looking for:

Roaming the streets with opinions on a leash when they roam there already on their own, the sociologist always falls behind his own caricature, trapped in the circle of these verisimilitudes that impose themselves only as they distance themselves from the truth they resemble in every detail except the critical one: truth, by definition, does not roam the streets.²¹

As elsewhere, here Rancière performs the circuitousness of Bourdieu's system: the sentence is very difficult to follow, using repetition to play on the sense of circularity and to stress a kind of absurd internal logic which is manifestly misguided when observed from outside. On this reading, Bourdieu finds what he expects to find, and he could not do otherwise given the very terms of his project and indeed those of sociology. Beginning from the premise of a rather familiar working class – *necessarily* structurally dominated, thereby devoid of the Kantian aesthetic and possessing an 'aesthetic' relation to the world which is not an aesthetic, but is only a pragmatic drive for simple and immediate pleasures – Bourdieu, then, bolsters a sense of endless social repetition. He produces his research objects, by asking questions to which he has already predicted an answer, rather than, for instance, exposing his respondents to cultural texts and asking them for spontaneous responses. The result is the reproduction of a simplistic, condescending, and *nostalgic* account of the working class, in which young people and ethnic minorities disappear and we are presented with a too easily recognisable 'sixty-something communist carpenter who [...] laments that the working class is not similar enough to itself, "not miserable enough."'²²

²¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. by Andrew Parker, trans. by John Drury, Corinne Oster, and Andrew Parker (London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 169.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Rancière astutely pinpoints a number of problems with Bourdieu's theory and method: Bourdieu's insistence on the continuity of social life often seems based on common-place assumptions which are then given the appearance of sociological respectability. In his postscript to *Homo Academicus*, an analysis of academic judgements in schoolchildren's files and scholars' obituaries, for instance, Bourdieu compares family background to professorial judgements in order to show their correlation; yet the student with the highest *marks* over the year is placed twentieth out of thirty-seven for familial capital (her father is a provincial tax inspector).²³ Bourdieu insists that it is the comments rather than the final marks which tell us most about the way that schools work in favour of those with pre-existing capital, but we should perhaps spend a little longer to think about such academic accomplishments given his general theory of reproduction through education: as Toril Moi remarks, it is rather strange that Bourdieu spends so little time talking about those 'miraculously' precocious individuals who emerge from dominated social spaces, especially bearing in mind his own rather unusual social mobility.²⁴

This critique of Bourdieu's disregard for intellectual and cultural potential to be found in unpredictable quarters, however, can be complicated by also thinking through the implications of Rancière's critique, and his concentration on formal intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural equality. Rancière's point is that we must start from a presumption of equality *even though* there is clearly extant social inequality, since to act *as if* we are equal is in fact to produce a space for that equality (just as to act *as if* there are entrenched inequalities between us in fact produces those inequalities):

²³ Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, p. 196.

²⁴ Toril Moi, 'Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture', *New Literary History*, 22.4 (1991), 1017-49 (p. 1045 n. 14).

The aesthetic judgment acts as if the palace were not an object of possession and domination. The joiner acts as if he possessed the perspective. This as if is no illusion. It is a redistribution of the sensible, a redistribution of the parts supposedly played by the higher and the lower faculties, the higher and the lower classes.²⁵

By stressing the centrality of the *perception* of equality for its very emergence, then, Rancière offers a convincing counter to Bourdieu's relentless focus on both social continuity and the habitus as embodied structure. On Rancière's reading, such a focus in fact sustains and even *produces* inequality by documenting and formalising it. The next question is whether it is necessary to eschew the documentation of structural inequality altogether in order to take seriously the potential of all individuals.

One answer to the question can be found in Simon Charlesworth's *Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*. Here Charlesworth is not seeking to correct Bourdieu with a phenomenological approach, but rather to show how Bourdieu can in fact be used as a phenomenologist: as a theorist who helps us understand embodied perceptual schemata.²⁶ The book, an ethnographic study of a working-class community in Rotherham, is certainly concerned with structural inequality and its embodiment in individuals, but the way that this inequality is embodied is not conveyed as cultural and social incompetence or failure, as it sometimes is in Bourdieu. Indeed, Charlesworth's participants are shown to be intelligent and quick-witted, for instance in their grasping of Bourdieu's main theory and its applicability to their own lives. They clearly have an intellectual potential that Bourdieu may well have missed by conflating competence with concrete knowledge: the tragedy depicted in the book is the complete failure of the state and social

²⁵ Jacques Rancière, 'The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge', *Critical Inquiry*, 36.1 (2009), 1-19 (p. 8).

²⁶ For a more corrective approach to the potential marriage of Bourdieu with phenomenology, see Atkinson, 'Phenomenological Additions to the Bourdieusian Toolbox'.

structures more generally to realise that potential. What becomes embodied in the participants' habitus is not incompetence itself, far less low intelligence, but a sense of resignation, hopelessness, and of fit with a landscape and horizon which is 'shit'.²⁷ This real, material, hard, embodied practical sense cannot be fixed by an appeal to formal equality alone, but by taking note of differences in the way that equal potential is realised. Rancière's critique of Bourdieu emerges from a series of very difficult problems with that work which must be worked through, but while it is clear that there are many examples of Bourdieu constructing his research objects in ways which preclude unexpected results, and that he ignores the importance of intellectual potential by concentrating on the distribution of concrete knowledge, it seems less certain that the logical counter to all this is an unmitigated concentration on outstanding feats of intellectual accomplishment from improbable quarters. Rancière maintains that 'the stubborn children of the proletariat look for signs of their vocation for humanity in the heaven of the poets and philosophers', but we should ask which specific proletarians do this and which do not (for we know that many do not), and what material conditions make individuals more or less likely to do so.²⁸

²⁷ Simon J. Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 290.

²⁸ Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, p. 209. I take this to be what Benjamin Noys meant when, in a recent working paper, he expressed doubt over Rancière's rather idealistic hopes for social progress as hinging on 'working-class *savants*'. Benjamin Noys, 'The Discrete Charm of Bruno Latour, or the Critique of the "Critique of Critique"', unpublished paper delivered at the University of Nottingham, 8 December 2011. An insistence on the potential for intellectual and cultural 'improvement' for the dominated is certainly understandable but, perhaps especially when it comes from individuals who have themselves 'got out' from those spaces, always has the potential to obfuscate the subtle differences in circumstances which make this avenue easier for some than for others. My own trajectory as a first-generation university student would not have been possible without the educational goodwill of my parents, convinced of the transformative power of institutions with which they had had relatively little personal contact. Such goodwill is an effect of privilege, connected to a certain upper-working class aspiration, and should not be subsumed into a general understanding of myself as working-class which would forget the concrete complexities of class hierarchies in contemporary Britain. (I forget that my family was sometimes ostracised for being too posh to live in the area where I grew up.) The forgetting of this class complexity is what allows an insidious assumption of hard work and cream rising to infiltrate even progressive discussions of class, and allows us to forget, yet again, all of those who are completely absent from the meritocratic myth.

What Charlesworth's study shows is that we can understand the internalisation and embodiment of unequal social structures in the habitus, without ossifying individuals in relatively dominated positions as fundamentally lacking in particular competences. One thing that he makes plain is that much of his participants' sense of resignation comes from a narrowed and circumscribed life-world: consigned to a relatively constricted set of opportunities and experiences, there is a close match between habitus and the social milieu from which it emerged. This 'fit' results in a sense of the necessity and inevitability of particular ways of life. Although we appear to be back in the realm of habitus and social reality as 'two translations of the same sentence', this relationship is notable precisely because it only exists in specific circumstances (what Bourdieu calls the 'native relation' to the social world).²⁹ When habitus comes into substantive contact with new and unfamiliar situations, by contrast, the result is a disjuncture in a previously accepted, even necessary, construction of the social world. This disjunctive experience, for Charlesworth and numerous other Bourdieusians for whom it is paramount, is far from universally positive, often resulting in psychological distress and a deeply equivocal relation both to fields previously related to as native, and new fields which have created disjuncture; yet it is nonetheless a site for agency in the Bourdieusian model. Such disjuncture is one of the ways in which field and habitus' intricate relations create possibilities for agency and social change, as we will see in the illustrations from my case studies which follow.

Given that feminist and other progressive politics are fundamentally interested in developing the potential for social change – and given that we might be reluctant to talk about the essential sameness of structures of domination across a wide variety of times and locations – tendencies toward

²⁹ See, for example, Bourdieu with Wacquant, 'For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals', p. 21.

determinism and social stasis in Bourdieu are clearly problematic for us here. Yet it is also precisely *because* Bourdieu helps us think seriously about the insidiousness and persistence of embodied domination, beyond the rhetoric of formal equality, that so many feminists have found his ideas useful. Such feminist movement is not necessarily founded on a simplistic reading of post-structuralism which sees in Bourdieu a welcome respite from the fatigues of ‘post Lacanian excess’, as Bridget Fowler puts it;³⁰ rather, given that many such feminists have been critical of the determinist aspects of his work, it may be because they believe in his aspiration to think continuity and change, agency and structure, at the same time. That Bourdieu often concentrated on one side of these dichotomies at the expense of the other is not a reason to jettison his contribution to social thought. Rather, by concentrating on the notion of field, sometimes under-developed in Bourdieu’s own work, and the disjuncture in habitus touched upon above, feminists and other commentators have sought to think through social change *with* Bourdieu’s ideas as well as against them.

HABITUS AND FIELD IN SYMBIOSIS

Despite Bourdieu’s apparent reluctance to construct field as an equal component in his analysis, feminists have seized upon the concept for their own work. This is because, when used in collaboration with habitus and capital, it allows for an understanding of limited agency and social change, whilst simultaneously taking very seriously enduring structures of inequality

³⁰ Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory*, p. 1. Julie McLeod argues that the framing of such an opposition between Bourdieu and post-structuralism, whether couched negatively or positively, tends to miss what post-structuralists actually do, what Bourdieu actually does and, ultimately, the complexity of late-twentieth century intellectual history in general. See Julie McLeod, ‘Feminists Re-Reading Bourdieu: Old Debates and New Questions about Gender Habitus and Gender Change’, *Theory and Research in Education*, 3.11 (2005), 11-30 (pp. 25-26).

and their embodied effects. Through a brief comparison of certain of Judith Butler's and Mary Daly's early experiences with their original disciplinary fields, we can see two contrasting relationships between habitus and field – broadly, the native and the outsider's relation – which convey the differences of strategy available to agents dealing with different sets of historical and sociological but also personal circumstances. A key point is that those in relatively dominated positions are not by any means bereft of potential strategies to negotiate fields; but such strategies are not available in every instance, are not identical to those available to agents in more dominant positions, and can be more or less successful in different contexts. Again, it is the concept of field itself, understood in conjunction with habitus, which helps us understand these processes.

As we will see in Chapter Three, Butler's entrance into the philosophical discipline took place through a relatively conventional, and ultimately rather elite, educational path. From a broadly middle-class milieu, she took classes in analytic philosophy at a local university while still at high school, and then degrees in the discipline from the liberal arts college Bennington, and Yale, which included a fellowship in Germany studying with Hans Georg Gadamer. Returning to America, Butler took a number of post-doctoral fellowships while writing up her thesis into the monograph *Subjects of Desire*, a relatively conventional work of philosophical close reading of Hegel and his twentieth-century followers. In the case of Butler's early philosophical career we see, then, something like *native fit* with a field in which many other new participants would likely experience numerous difficulties. This is not to say that Butler did not in fact experience struggles as she attempted to forge her successful path, but rather that her trajectory suggests the *relative* ease with which she navigated her movements through this most prestigious of fields.

Broadly middle-class habitus, reinforced through an elite education, created a relative fit between habitus and field when Butler entered the philosophical discipline as a producer; this fit can also be understood as homology between her early positions in this discipline, in the general educational field, and in the broader field of power. Whilst we saw above a number of problems with the notion of homology when it is used as a prism through which to understand all of social space, it arguably remains useful for understanding the ways in which relatively privileged positions are often reproduced across fields. In a recent study, Tony Bennett and his co-authors have made precisely this point, arguing that the idea of homology must not be jettisoned if we are to account for the ways in which capital is consolidated, and complex forms of privilege emerge, in the overlaps between field positions.³¹ We can see, however, why homology cannot account for other types of field position by comparing this native relation to a disciplinary field with Daly's early experiences as an intellectual producer within theology. In contrast to Butler's transition from philosophy student to academic, in Daly's case we see how the production of a first book can create a disjuncture between habitus and field, and the potential such disjuncture has for modifying both elements.

The only child of working-class Catholic parents, and a first-generation university student, Daly invested huge amounts of intellectual and emotional energy into formal educational structures, eventually receiving three doctoral degrees (including the first PhD in sacred theology awarded to a woman by a Catholic institution). It is clear that these educational spaces and successes sustained her in some sense, and that she had feelings of loyalty to the university system in general and academic theology in particular: Bourdieu might characterise this as the *over-identification* with formal educational

³¹ Tony Bennett *et al.*, *Culture, Class, Distinction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 13-14.

structures typical of academic success stories with relatively little capital other than formal qualifications.³² This sense of accomplishment, however, was complicated by a series of negative experiences with academic structures when she entered the theological field as an intellectual *producer*, in particular the extremely hostile response from Boston College's theology faculty and institutional administration to her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*. The resultant disjuncture between her habitus' sense of the academic life (as unbounded, intellectually rigorous, and open to any new idea, sufficiently reasoned) and the actual doctrinal and political negotiations required to survive in a context as complex as a disciplinary field, had a major but far from unambiguous effect on Daly's ideas about education, knowledge production, and institutional authority.

Whilst it would be tempting to understand this disjuncture in the same way as Daly herself – as something like a consciousness-raising moment, and a movement away from what she would come to see as the 'academented' nature of higher education – there appears to be something more complicated going on. The disjuncture allows Daly to reflect on this situation and her own history in a way that would seem to have been unavailable to her before, and the high-profile nature of the controversy, along with Daly's eventual triumph against the college (at least in this first battle), can be understood as a contribution to the vast modifications of the theological field taking place in the 1960s. And yet these changes, to both habitus and field, have limited effects: Daly remains in the university system of which she is a product until her enforced retirement in 1999, and her movement away from theological scholarship and toward feminist polemic is gradual and equivocal. Similarly,

³² See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, 'The School as a Conservative Force: Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities', trans. by J. C. Whitehouse, in *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education: A Selection of Contemporary Research Papers Together with Some of the Formative Writings of the Recent Past*, ed. by John Eggleston (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 32-46 (p. 34).

her successes against apparent attempts to censor emergent feminist and radical theologies in the 1960s and beyond contributed to an opening up of the field to such dissent, but these voices remain marginal, and there has arguably been a subsequent reversal of that modification of the field, certainly in the Catholic theological domain after the impasses of the Second Vatican Council.³³

We can understand Daly's experiences through some of the emphases which feminist Bourdieusians have placed on a disjunctive relation between habitus and field, and the potential resultant alterations of both elements. Lois McNay, for instance, while critical of Bourdieu's tendency to under-think the implications of field, especially when it comes to gender, notes that it is the relation between habitus and field which can help us take seriously the reflexive capacities of the dominated. Resisting what she takes to be the overstatement of freedom and potential for subversion afforded to reflexive modernity by Anthony Giddens, amongst others, McNay uses Bourdieu to negotiate an understanding of the partial lucidity of dominated groups when they enter new fields. As in Bridget Fowler's account of women in the literary field above, McNay's discussion of women's entrance into new job markets likewise stresses the felt strangeness of entering new fields, and the capacity for agents to use this sense of being out of the game as a potentially productive resource for resistance and transformation of the field itself. Such reflexivity, which does indeed hold the potential for social subversion (as well as for reactionary stances), does not efface but rather modifies both embodied domination and structures of inequality in the field.³⁴ Similarly, the

³³ See Adrian Hastings, 'Catholic History from Vatican I to John Paul II', in *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*, ed. by Adrian Hastings (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 1-13 (p. 6). In Chapter Two, I deal with the general state of the theological field during Daly's early career, as well as her series of struggles with Boston College, in significantly more detail.

³⁴ Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16.1 (1999), 95-117 (pp. 109-11). More recently, Beverley Skeggs has also argued against the tendency to overstate both reflexivity and social mobility in theories of late modernity such as Giddens's; she develops a Bourdieusian counter to such arguments,

disjuncture felt by Daly upon entering the theological field as a producer does not have unambiguously transformative results, but rather creates the *space* for a questioning of authority and a more ironic approach to formal knowledge. As we will see in the next chapter, Daly's adoption of this more subversive attitude is accompanied finally by sometimes quite extreme intellectual alienation, and so we can understand the potentially transformative power of the non-native relation to field without imagining it to be unambiguously positive.

In the case studies of academic feminists which follow, induction into both the field of intellectual production generally and the different specific academic fields each enters at different stages in their careers, has specific effects on the type of work produced, intellectual reception of that work, and subsequent modification of ideas and style; all of this also affects the make-up of those fields and the potential work which might subsequently be imagined within their remits. We can see similar processes in the discipline of women's studies, a primary concern of this thesis, but that field is both similar to and markedly different from other academic fields in a number of ways. Women's studies practitioners insist upon the academic rigour and disciplinary worth of that subject, for instance on the basis that the relative absence of women as objects of study in traditional subjects such as history makes those disciplines themselves unrigorous; but at the same time, they must negotiate the difficulties of being practitioners in a new discipline which is often perceived as biased and politically contaminated, and is challenged on its disciplinary foundations. Indeed, the very notion that women's studies constitutes a discipline at all has been challenged (an argument which I will try to counter

holding that they generalise out from a specific, and specifically middle-class, experience of social freedom, thereby ignoring the ways that such 'universal' options are in fact classed, raced, and gendered. Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 173; see also Will Atkinson, *Class, Individualization and Late Modernity: In Search of the Reflexive Worker* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 17-43 *et passim*.

in Chapter Four). As a field, then, women's studies has a very particular history and contemporary constitution which impacts on the ideas produced within it, the broader reception of those understood to be women's studies scholars, and subsequent identification (or disidentification) with both women's studies and academic feminism more broadly.³⁵

Understanding women's studies as a field in the sense that I am developing it in this chapter allows us to understand what is going on in Daly's and Butler's dealings with the discipline, and in the dealings of other women's studies practitioners with them in turn. In particular, since neither Butler nor Daly has ever found an institutional (nor, as I will argue in Chapter Four, an *intellectual*) home in the discipline, thinking of women's studies as a field allows us to explain the processes of mutual exclusion and rejection which maintain disciplinary boundaries. Through a brief exposition of the specifics of my case study's relations with women's studies toward the end of this chapter, we will see the nature of such processes and how field, again, helps us to explain them. Since we are now turning to a specifically feminist problem (women's studies as discipline and its treatment of particular feminists), it is useful in this theoretical chapter to turn specifically to what Bourdieu had to say about women, gender, and feminism. Since many feminists who have found Bourdieu's work deeply helpful for their own research have also been extremely critical of his approach to gender, it is important to see how those criticisms may affect my own feminist appropriation of his work.

³⁵ See Chapter Four for an account of the numerous paradoxes and negotiations central to the establishment of women's studies as a disciplinary field.

IS BOURDIEU INTERESTED IN WOMEN?

His description of the gender system could be compared with the sudden appearance of a piece of alchemy in a chemistry book.

Michèle le Doeuff³⁶

In his book *Bourdieu's Politics*, Jeremy Lane argues that the contention put forward by some feminists – that Bourdieu was largely indifferent to gender issues until the publication, rather late in his career, of the controversial *Masculine Domination* – does not hold up to scrutiny of the sociologist's work. Indeed, as long ago as 1962, Bourdieu was documenting radical post-war changes to gender relations and matrimonial strategies in rural France.³⁷ Bourdieu was not, then, indifferent to gender as a crucial determinant of social trajectory; but, as Lane also makes clear, this does not mean that his ideas about gender, and more specifically about *women*, will prove unproblematic for a feminist appropriation.³⁸ This distinction is a crucial one. Despite his suggestion in *Masculine Domination* that his work marked an important departure from a number of the common-places of feminist analysis,³⁹ Bourdieu seems to maintain that, in his discussions of gender, his research interests are principally the same as those of feminists: that is, that when he says he is interested in gender, he means the same thing as feminists when they say that they are interested in gender.⁴⁰ However, in this section I will try

³⁶ Michèle le Doeuff, 'Ants and Women, or Philosophy without Borders', in *Contemporary French Philosophy*, ed. by A. Phillips Griffiths (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1987), pp. 41-54 (p. 45).

³⁷ The article is 'Bachelorhood and the Peasant Condition', re-printed in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Bachelors' Ball: The Crisis of Peasant Society in Béarn*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), pp. 7-129.

³⁸ Lane, *Bourdieu's Politics*, pp. 99-101.

³⁹ See especially his contention that the introduction of analyses of public institutions such as schools (as opposed to concentrating solely on the domestic sphere) will radically alter feminist struggle. Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ In his 2001 introduction to *The Bachelors' Ball*, for instance, he describes his research object as 'the sufferings and dramas linked to the relations between the sexes – which is, more or less, the title I gave, before the emergence of 'gender studies', to the article in *Les Temps Modernes* on this problem'; and in the preface to the English version of *Masculine Domination*, he notes

to show some differences between what feminists and Bourdieu mean when they assert this.

In their article 'Liberty, Equality... But Most of All, Fraternity', Francoise Armengaud, Ghaïss Jasser, and Christine Delphy discuss the entrance of Bourdieu and other male luminaries into French academic and state-political discussions about gender. Critical of a number of the publications and statements of such men, the authors protest the reduction of legitimate gender studies (in the work of Jacques Commaille and others, rather than Bourdieu here) to issues around the family and child-rearing: as they see it, women are being constructed as an object of study 'exclusively from the stand-point of their usefulness to men and/or the problems they pose for men'. They contend that, conversely, women's studies must remain a space in which the voices of women can be heard, and hold that the result will be a much more substantive challenge to problematic gender relations than that offered by merely assessing 'the role of women':

women's studies do more than challenge assumptions about gender relations; by focusing the analysis of society on those relations, they upset the whole perspective of the social sciences and create many completely new objects. That is why women's studies exist as an entire special field and not a mere opinion about sex relations, or a specialisation in sociology or history or in one or another of the social sciences.⁴¹

When Bourdieu says, in his introduction to *The Bachelors' Ball*, that he is interested in 'the relations between the sexes', this does not necessarily mean what many academic feminists mean when they say they are interested

his purported debt to 'the many works devoted to the relations between the sexes'. See Bourdieu, *The Bachelors' Ball*, p. 1; *Masculine Domination*, p. vii.

⁴¹ Francoise Armengaud, Ghaïss Jasser, and Christine Delphy, 'Liberty, Equality... But Most of All, Fraternity', trans. unknown, *Trouble and Strife*, 31 (1995), 43-49 (p. 49).

in gender relations.⁴² Interesting though that collection of essays is (bringing together as it does three essays which use the same ethnographic research but which were originally published in 1962, 1972, and 1989), the research primarily concerns matrimonial strategies and kinship relations. Thus, in all three essays, the concern is predominantly the relations *between and within families* – stratification of families according to prestige and income; relations of different children to parents according to birth order; and so on – rather than between men and women, the specifics of which relation is addressed comparatively rarely. Perhaps rather than wondering whether Bourdieu is interested in gender, we should ask whether he is interested in women.

When discussing the *Bachelors' Ball* essays in his introduction, Bourdieu shows notable tenderness and consideration for the bachelors of his title: eldest sons of socially eminent peasant families in a Pyrenean village, doomed to bachelorhood due to a combination of the exodus of socially suitable women to the town (or their aspirations to marry into the town), and the endurance of a traditional system of matrimonial exchange which forbade them to marry substantially beneath themselves.⁴³ In contrast, the young women seem not to arouse much sympathy from Bourdieu at all: the desertion of their traditional marriage partners, although attributed to wider socio-economic change in late capitalism, is also connected to the women's desire for an easier and more fashionable way of life (connected to their greater consumption of popular culture), and reluctance to settle for the maladroit but, on Bourdieu's reading, rather sweet bumpkins with whom they grew up.⁴⁴

Yet Bourdieu does not talk to these women in order to ascertain their motivations; indeed, there are far fewer women interviewed than men, and

⁴² Bourdieu, *The Bachelors' Ball*, p. 1.

⁴³ Bourdieu talks, for instance, of the 'often very painful' interviews with old bachelors, and of his feeling of 'betrayal' for publishing the research. See Bourdieu, *The Bachelors' Ball*, p. 3. We should note that these affective responses are probably connected to Bourdieu's own relation to the men: the research took place in the village where he had himself grown up, and he secured interviews with his former neighbours through his father.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Bourdieu, *The Bachelors' Ball*, pp. 60; 85-91.

those women are not of the new generation. In his reading of the discussion of women in the new service industries in *Distinction*, Jeremy Lane likewise notes the lack of female voices: Bourdieu assumes that such women are forced simply to translate the most traditional notions of femininity into the workplace, yet had he talked to them, 'he might have found such women to possess rather more ambivalent or contradictory attitudes to dominant gender norms than the "unconditional recognition" he claimed they manifested.'⁴⁵ As Armengaud, Jasser, and Delphy contend, a properly women's studies approach would be fundamentally interested in bringing to the fore these female voices.

Similarly, *Masculine Domination* has been criticised for its failure to leave space for women's voices; in particular, as many observers have noted, it contains startlingly few references to the work of feminists.⁴⁶ Bourdieu seems to construct 'a "straw man" – or woman' of feminist research, as Armengaud, Jasser, and Delphy put it: a narrow, scholastically spurious body of work, against which can be contrasted Bourdieu's own, significantly more rigorous, writing on gender.⁴⁷ Yet quite who these feminists are, and precisely where they make the errors he describes, is not clear. And this apparent lack of familiarity with the rich and varied field of women's studies (going so far as to reportedly say that he had not used the work of feminists simply because he had not read them)⁴⁸ sometimes leads him to over-use particular theorists, where a more comprehensive grasp of the field might have resulted in more varied citation. Virginia Woolf is cited throughout *Masculine Domination*, providing literary illustrations, a personal case study, and theoretical support.

These specific problems with Bourdieu's discussions of gender are compounded by what some feminists have understood as a broader and

⁴⁵ Lane, *Bourdieu's Politics*, p. 114.

⁴⁶ See, for example, McLeod, 'Feminists Re-Reading Bourdieu', p. 19.

⁴⁷ Armengaud *et al.*, 'Liberty, Equality...', p. 46.

⁴⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 48.

potentially more damaging limitation of his work. Claire Michard-Marchal and Claudine Ribery point out that Bourdieu, along with many other mainstream social scientists, makes a fundamental error when he assumes that women can be understood as a socio-economic group directly analogous to shopkeepers or middle managers, as in the sentence,

In our analyses we are particularly concerned with Arts students; we have only rarely drawn on various other surveys dealing with the whole student population or other faculties (students and politics, the users of Lille University Library, medical students, *female students*).⁴⁹

Women, these feminists argue, currently inhabit as vast an array of class positions as men (and have done historically), and so to position women as a social group in this way, as Bourdieu sometimes does, is to greatly simplify the complexity of social life, and in particular the intricate intersectionality of classed and gendered difference.⁵⁰

This over-privileging of gender as a determinant of women's, if not men's, social position, which is almost paradoxical given Bourdieu's general tendency to focus on class as primary, is often not explicit, but emerges through odd groupings and differentiations which do not appear to be based on much apart from gendered preconceptions. In the following passage, taken from *The State Nobility*, Bourdieu discusses the results of a survey sent to students at both the École Normale Supérieure de Sèvres, an elite, all-female higher education establishment, and the École Normale Supérieure de la rue d'Ulm, its male equivalent. Amongst other things, the survey asked students who they would most like to see invited to the institution to speak:

⁴⁹ Bourdieu and Passeron, *The Inheritors*, p. ix (my emphasis). This is my own example.

⁵⁰ Claire Michard-Marchal and Claudine Ribery, *Sexisme et sciences humaine* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1982); cited in le Doeuff, 'Ants and Women', pp. 45-46.

In keeping with the division of labor between the sexes, which assigns politics to men and aesthetics to women (particularly literature, considered more ‘feminine’ than philosophy), Sèvres women carry the precedence given to *the cultural over the political* to its extreme as it were; we find one lone political figure, Mendès France, among the 15 most frequently mentioned speakers. Jean-Paul Sartre holds first place, as at Ulm, but, in contrast to the men, *sèvriennes* give ample weight to theater directors and actors [...] artists, filmmakers, musicians, men of letters, *and well-known women, primarily those known for their feminist work, such as Simone de Beauvoir*.⁵¹

Of the multiple umbrages a feminist might take at this statement, we might single out, firstly, why it is that a category such as ‘well-known women’, so broad as to be almost meaningless in the context of this typology, is marshalled into a list of practitioners in the cultural industries (and we are presumably to take it as read that such a practitioner might not be a well-known woman also); secondly, why women primarily known for their *feminist* work should be considered as cultural figures rather than political ones; and thirdly, why Beauvoir in particular should, yet again, be understood as primarily a literary figure rather than a philosophical or indeed a political one. As Toril Moi has argued through her own feminist appropriations of the Bourdieusian framework, Beauvoir’s positioning as a writer first and foremost, and specifically as philosophically inferior to Sartre, as well as her own internalisation of that positioning, is intricately tied up with the kinds of androcentric cultural hierarchies Bourdieu implicitly and unreflexively reproduces here.⁵² As difficult as we can expect this task to be, it is the job of the sociologist to tease out the subtle differences between recognition of

⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. by Lauretta C. Clough (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), pp. 176-78 (my emphases).

⁵² Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 52-57.

internalised stratification, and the false grouping of individuals and attributes according to preconceived notions of social composition.

The result of all this is that there is little in Bourdieu's writings on gender that has not been put more subtly, and with a greater regard for women's experience, by feminists. But it seems clear that Bourdieu's problematic treatment of gender issues is not, in itself, a reason that his ideas cannot be used for feminist projects: many feminists, as we have seen, have found his ideas suitable for appropriation into work which is much more clearly situated within the framework of women's studies. Through these critical, feminist uses of Bourdieu's work, in particular those which stress the importance of field, we have seen how the Bourdieusian framework offers a way of thinking about change as well as continuity for women, an aspect of gender relations which Bourdieu himself repeatedly overlooked. By briefly introducing Daly's and Butler's trajectories within the discipline of women's studies, understood as a field in the more dynamic and critical sense outlined throughout this chapter, we will see how critical feminist appropriations of Bourdieu, the importance of field as an analytical construct, and the relation between habitus and field as a motor for social change, all come together to produce a broadly Bourdieusian account of intellectual agency within a context of disciplinary constraint. Women's studies is central to this model as applied to the thesis because, as a new and potentially relatively open disciplinary field, it could have provided a fruitful way of negotiating some of the difficulties Daly and Butler faced in more traditional sections of academia; yet this was not a direction either of these feminists took. Why this should be, and what might have happened if they had found women's studies to be an institutional and intellectual home, will be crucial to the development of the main arguments following from analysis of their histories. By turning now to Daly's and Butler's engagements with women's studies, we will see how

habitus and field work in symbiosis to produce the discipline as a space with which they are at odds.

DALY AND BUTLER IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

If we take the commencement of the first US women's studies course in 1970 as a logical historical marker of the inauguration of the discipline, then for historical reasons, we can expect Daly and Butler to have had markedly different relations to it. For Daly, beginning to produce feminist theology in the middle and late 1960s, there is no discipline called women's studies to which she can relate that work, and a very limited pool of feminist scholarship from which she can draw reference. She understands her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, to be a work of theology, and even when it is rejected as such by the protectionist centre of that field, for some time continues to identify herself in those disciplinary terms: quite simply, she has nowhere else to go. For Butler, on the other hand, coming to the field of intellectual production in the late 1980s, women's studies is established as a disciplinary field (by this time it is possible to take women's studies degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate level in both the USA and UK, for instance), but she nonetheless does not place herself as an actor within it. Emerging from a relatively elite education in continental philosophy at Yale and under Hans Georg Gadamer in Germany, her aspirations are disciplinarily circumscribed by philosophy. She later describes the pressures to produce her early monograph *Subjects of Desire*, a work of close reading of Hegel and his twentieth-century French appropriators, in order to establish herself as a philosophically legitimate scholar and, more plainly, in order to get a job.⁵³ As

⁵³ See Butler's preface to the second edition of *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, 2nd edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), for example p. viii.

I argue in Chapter Three, Butler's early understanding of herself as strictly a philosopher is legible through the lens of competing fields, in particular the academic value ascribed to 'pure' philosophy, and the relatively circumscribed options available to ambitious and educationally successful but inexperienced young academics entering the field of intellectual production.

Having established herself in philosophy and attained her first permanent job in the field after a number of prestigious fellowships, Butler could by the early 1990s enter the women's studies field a comparatively secure and assured intellectual producer. It is with her early career trajectory in mind that we should understand the notably sure-footed innovation of *Gender Trouble*, which has been documented by feminists, particularly critical ones, as a rather impertinent intervention in, or rather *on*, women's studies.⁵⁴ Butler is positioned as an impertinent *outsider* to the field, irrespective of the extent to which *Gender Trouble* is in fact difficult to place disciplinarily otherwise, or the extent to which she engages with women's studies scholarship and is referenced in subsequent women's studies works. *Gender Trouble*'s problematisations of the category 'women' (and those of other post-structuralist feminist works from around this time) are, in these cases, understood as an attack on the foundation and legitimacy of women's studies, rather than a part of the tradition of auto-critique which animates the field.⁵⁵ Such defensiveness and even protectionism for a field in general or a particular section felt to be under attack can be made legible when we understand the specific vulnerabilities of women's studies as a field, outlined in Chapter Four. Although *Gender Trouble* is the book which will come to be seen as Butler's theoretical inauguration, and not only in women's studies, she

⁵⁴ In her preface to the second edition of *Gender Trouble*, Butler insists on the work as internal to the field of women's studies, and argues against particular feminist readings of it which locate its speaking position as external to feminism. See *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. vii.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Victoria Robinson and Diane Richardson, 'Repackaging Women and Feminism: Taking the Heat off Patriarchy,' in *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, ed. by Diane Bell and Renate Klein (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1996), pp. 179-87.

has already by this stage published a full-length monograph in a field highly valued in the general academic hierarchy. These field conditions interrelate with Butler's habitus, emerging from a broadly middle-class background and conditioned by an elite education in a prestigious discipline, to produce specific possibilities for the production of a seemingly rather assured feminist theory and its reception as upstartism.

Daly's trajectory in the women's studies field is very different from Butler's, and although this is clearly connected to the historical moments at which they entered the discipline, this is by no means the only significant factor in that difference. Originally unable to place her work in any field except the theological one, that early work is itself a contribution to the formation of a discrete field for feminist scholarship: Daly was feeding into a disciplinary field which was yet to emerge. By the publication of *Gyn/Ecology* in the late 1970s, however, Daly is producing work which, much like *Gender Trouble*, it is difficult to place disciplinarily unless we allow for women's studies as a discrete field. Marrying disciplinary approaches including the geographical, sociological, historical, and theological, the work is nonetheless not merely interdisciplinary, but for a number of reasons (including the other scholars Daly cites and the spaces in which it is acknowledged as a foundational if controversial work), can be understood as belonging to the field of women's studies specifically.

Both Butler's and Daly's subsequent career trajectories can be partially understood by taking into account their changing relations to women's studies as well as the ways in which other women's studies practitioners come to frame them in relation to the field. These complex and symbiotic relations are the subject of subsequent chapters, but what is important is that both Daly and Butler achieve an eventual self-understanding, reproduced and sustained by the collective endeavours which police the academic field, that women's

studies is no longer a legitimate home for them. Despite producing hugely important feminist works, some of them transformative of the very field of women's studies itself, in very different ways Daly and Butler are positioned as marginal, even abject, figures in the field: clearly influential but not really *of* women's studies. Whilst in Butler's case this disciplinary casting out – homologous to her treatment in other disciplines, such as literary studies and political philosophy, in which she has participated and become read as an outsider and interloper – works with her accumulated capital to produce her as an *intellectual*, that is a cross-disciplinary, politically engaged social commentator, for Daly the effect is increasing isolation from institutional support and scholarly community and, finally, an arguably defensive retreat from the mores of academic rigour, and toward notoriety as a 'misandric' polemicist. Although in some ways their positioning in women's studies is similar, then, their vastly different levels of capital (at least within an elite context such as the field of intellectual production), and habitus produced in very different educational and class contexts, mean that the *meaning* of such a disciplinary casting out, and its subsequent effects, are very different.

The complexity of both field and habitus, then, and the intricate ways in which they are related, can mean that capital accumulates in different and complex ways in different conditions, and can accrue different meanings in relation to different subjects. Butler's and Daly's experiences with women's studies appear similar, but different make-up of capital and a different set of experiences with academic structures more generally mean that they have quite different strategies available to them. Offering an interesting illustration of the differences in strategy available to different individuals in apparently similar conditions, Beverley Skeggs discusses individuals to whom particular attributes 'stick', as seemingly natural qualities, and those who are able to pass more fluidly between identities and constructions of self. Lack of contact with

new fields is arguably what accounts for this essentialising of some subjects and not others – a sense of fit with the social world, both in that subject's own habitus and in the perceptions of others, creates the appearance of necessity – but the desirable interaction with new fields does not need to be radical or transformative to create the possibility for new capital-accumulation.⁵⁶ Skeggs shows how entering further education courses in social care, for instance, allows for the development of a 'respectable' self-image in a group of young, working-class women: this respectability discourse is, on the one hand, closely aligned to a long history of moral hygiene processes policing working-class women's social conduct (and in that sense deeply regressive); but on the other hand, offers those women realisable forms of self-esteem. 'Respectability' is a problematically gendered and classed term, tending to reproduce a division between the deserving and undeserving poor, and to define itself in contradistinction to particular women to whom an 'excessive' sexuality, for instance, sticks as an essential attribute; and simultaneously it is available as a potential resource for appropriation by subjects negotiating new fields. The strategies available to these women are not unproblematic and are certainly not limitless, but they are reflective and conscious ways of dealing with a specific set of circumstances and a particular make-up of capital.⁵⁷ Agency develops, then, through an equivocal relation between habitus and field and

⁵⁶ Bernard Lahire problematises Bourdieu's concentration on radical disjunctures between habitus and field as motors for change, arguing that the complexity of social life means that individuals are forced to question and adjust their habitus almost on a daily basis, and that such 'micro-crises' should be taken seriously as sites for agency. Lahire, *The Plural Actor*, pp. 45-47. On the essentialising of some subjects and attributes, but not others, see Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, pp. 105-07 *et passim*. The idea of 'stickiness' in attributes and subjects, specifically, comes from Sara Ahmed; see her *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), for example pp. 89-92.

⁵⁷ Skeggs discusses respectability and young working-class women in her *Formations of Class and Gender* (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 41-55. This appropriation of respectability discourse can also be seen, for instance, in the movement for gay marriage. As critics point out, such appropriation of heteronormative relationship styles can be understood as socially regressive, but we can also understand it as a *classed* desire for respectability: the desirability or even acceptability of non-marital cohabitation, even for heterosexual couples, may be less certain in working-class as well as non-urban contexts. The desire to be respectable, then, is potentially reactionary but nonetheless has the capacity to mobilise.

through appropriations of terms which can be imagined otherwise. As we have seen throughout this chapter, keeping an eye on the complexity of field, and understanding it to be a site of struggle rather than stasis, allows us to see the potential for adaptation and strategy where Bourdieu often saw only continuity.

What feminist accounts such as Skeggs's point toward is the potential applicability of Bourdieusian theory if we allow field to take a central position alongside habitus and capital. Against the notion of unequivocal homology of field positions, or field-effect as primarily a process of euphemism or translation of habitus into a new context, field is understood in these formulations as a crucial theoretical construct which allows for adaptability and reflexivity of identity-formation, in specific social contexts. This is something like a potential resolution of the agency-structure problem in sociology more generally, except that field is a more context-specific concept than structure: it is specific fields which interact with habitus to produce specific agential potentialities in concrete situations. In the analyses of feminist academics which form the basis of this thesis, it is specifically the field of intellectual production, and more specifically the fields of different academic disciplines, which interact with these feminists' habitus to produce change in both habitus and field over time. The modifications in intellectual output and career trajectory which emerge through their histories can be theorised as complex classed and gendered responses to the realities of field dynamics: for instance, constraints on written form imposed by particular fields (which can be obeyed more or less successfully, or self-reflexively rejected); forms of intellectual security or insecurity which often correlate to secure or insecure, central or marginal field positions; and the positions of specific disciplines in relation to the broader field of intellectual production. Although, and also because, their trajectories are very different, reading Butler

and Daly together through the lens of intellectual fields can help us understand the historical, biographical, and institutional factors feeding into the production of feminist theory.

CONCLUSION

What hopefully emerges through this reading of Butler's and Daly's entrances into, responses to, and constructions and marginalisations within different disciplinary fields, is an understanding of the intricate ways in which habitus and field interact to produce possibilities and constraints in concrete situations. This formulation seeks to resist the tendency in Bourdieu to reduce the complexity of social life to the socio-economic foundationalism of a habitus, more or less unchanged in every new context. By showing how habitus is itself modified by experience, and field by new entrants lacking the native relation to it, such a reading aims to make legible social change and agential possibility within the context of social constraint. Making visible material and institutional restrictions on intellectual production, and their psychological and embodied effects, is not an attempt to disabuse intellectual producers of their sense of scholarly possibility, but conversely to produce a fuller understanding of the sociological conditions of that possibility. What Bourdieu can help us get toward is a sense of the different ways in which we can *negotiate* fields, in particular when we have access to theoretical constructs which can frame an understanding of their workings.

In many ways, this chapter may seem to constitute more a critique of Bourdieu's ideas than a justification for and application of them. Indeed, as we have seen, many feminists have been critical of Bourdieu's theoretical treatment of women, his apparent inability to think social change, and his

under-utilisation of the crucial concept of field. And yet many of the feminists who have criticised these elements of Bourdieu's work are explicitly indebted to his ideas for their research. This is because, however many problems we find with Bourdieu and however infuriating he can be, there is the seed of something in his work which is of paramount importance to feminists: even if we do not always find it carried out in his own analyses, his ideas really can help us think the most stubborn, ingrained, and embodied internalisations of structures of domination, without for all that foreclosing the possibility of social change or agency.

We will see precisely the tension of this relation between social change and structure in the next chapter, when we look in significantly more detail at the specifics of Mary Daly's educational history, career, and intellectual trajectory. Daly's story is simultaneously one of remarkable aspiration and achievement beyond what any determinist model could account for, and one in which the relation between habitus and field eventually all but extinguishes that aspiration. This is the story of both the remarkable *change* which occurred within the American academy in the 1960s, and the conservative forces which stymied that change. Through detailed examination of this case study, we will see precisely how habitus and field can work in complementary or antagonistic ways, and how strategy is always possible but never limitless. By holding on to the constructs of capital, habitus, and field as equal components in our research, it is possible to come to an understanding of both the power of external social forces, and the potential for negotiation and subversion available to people in particular situations. This understanding of Bourdieu, linked to a commitment to his insistence on a rigorous interrogation of the common-places of cultural and intellectual judgement, forms the theoretical basis of this thesis.

Ch. 2

Alienation by Degrees

Educational Aspiration and Disciplinary Marginalisation in Mary Daly and her Critics

Let me make it perfectly clear that I can foresee some of the comments that may appear in reviews of this review, or at the very least in the conversations of my critics. Perhaps in this time of paper shortage I can prevent some unnecessary use of these resources by anticipating what some will feel compelled to say:

‘Daly has now gone off the deep end.’

- LIBERAL CATHOLIC

‘I saw this coming in 1968.’

- CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC

‘Unscholarly, abrasive, slick.’

- BOSSTOWN COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR

‘Ladies, this is a broadside.’

- TOKEN WOMAN, *U.W.I.H.O.B* [Ultimate weapon in the hands of the boys]

‘She misunderstands both Daly and St Paul.’

- RADICAL CATHOLIC

‘I fear that she will not be taken seriously by the male theological establishment.’

- CATHOLIC FEMINIST

‘Her problem has progressed from a simple case of penis envy to a rare and convoluted delusory form of castration anxiety.’

- EMINENT PSYCHOLOGIST

‘Despite her disclaimers, she still *belongs* to the Judeo-Christian tradition.’

- LIBERAL PROTESTANT PROFESSOR

‘She should join the Unitarian Universalists.’

- UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

‘Tasteless.’

- ANONYMOUS

‘Stunning!’

- MYSELF

Mary Daly¹

In the previous chapter, we saw how modifications of a Bourdieusian model of intellectual production could shed light on the ways in which disciplinary formations affect the creation of feminist theory. In particular, a theory of the interplay of habitus and field emerged to account for the ways in which institutional conditions and biographical factors interact to affect the scholarship and style of intellectual producers. In this chapter and the next, we

¹ This is taken from Daly’s 1975 ‘Feminist Postchristian Introduction’ to her *Church and the Second Sex: With the Feminist Postchristian Introduction and New Archaic Afterwords by the Author*, 3rd edn (Boston: Beacon, 1985), pp. 48-49 (original emphasis).

will see how this notion of a symbiotic relation between habitus and field applies to two specific feminist theorists: Mary Daly and Judith Butler. Here, I am concerned with Mary Daly as an intellectual producer operating in the fields of theology and women's studies: we will see how early experiences have the potential to affect the development of intellectual work, but always within the context of disciplinary formations and institutional conditions. In Daly's case, we particularly see how the relation between *classed* habitus and disciplinary field works to create particular conditions for the production of feminist theory: through, for instance, the early hyper-identification with formal education associated with first-generation university students, and the potential for consciousness-raising which emerges when that identification is broken.

In this chapter, I want to think about what intellectual work Mary Daly *does* as well as what 'Mary Daly' *means* in the various fields in which she operates. In particular, this section seeks to understand how her positions in the theological and women's studies fields converge as well as differ; how those fields interact with her habitus and those of other participants within them; and how her writing and style, as well as some common reactions to them, can be read through this Bourdieusian lens in order to understand more about what she could achieve in these fields – and what, in the end, she could not. To put forward such a reading is both to seek to understand her writing by taking the *restrictions* of her positions in these fields into account, and also to try to understand the *choices* which were open to her. In particular, I am interested in how the specifics of Daly's habitus – conditioned in what can be broadly understood as a working-class, New York Irish Catholic milieu – is affected by entrance into intellectual fields: both the general one of higher education, in which she was remarkably successful as a student, and the specific disciplines in which she emerges as an intellectual *producer*. This is

not a straightforward causal relation, in which entrance into new fields *forces* habitus to adapt, but a less clear process of mutual adaptation between habitus and field. Daly's sense of the meaning of intellectual work is radically changed by her broadly negative experiences when she enters the theological field as an intellectual producer, for instance; but at the same time, her early intellectual productions themselves – as important contributions to an emerging radical current within American theology in the 1960s, and probably the first works putting forward a *feminist* theology – produce significant modifications in what are perceived to be acceptable modes of theological scholarship. Daly's subsequent moves through the fields of theology and women's studies, in particular her coming to be understood, by herself as well as others, as *outside* of those fields, can be understood in this way: as gradual but significant, mutually constituted modifications in both habitus *and* field.

Further, if Daly comes to be 'rejected' by (and to herself reject) those disciplines with which we nonetheless continue to associate her, it is important to understand what specific 'extra-intellectual' work is being performed here: which boundaries are being policed, which theoretical and political allegiances are being formed (and broken), which formulations of intellectual history are becoming common-sensical whilst others become 'nonsensical'. Daly is a particularly useful case study for an analysis of these kinds of field conditions precisely because of such disciplinary exclusions: for feminist intellectual history in particular, I will argue, Daly comes to be a place-holder for a broad series of difficulties with some currents of feminism (essentialism, utopianism, separatism), which through the figure of Daly are able to be cast outside of the domain of women's studies proper. In this case, it seems crucial to understand what is going on in such manoeuvres, as well as the ways in which the particularity of Daly's habitus has some bearing both on the intellectual work she wishes to produce at different times in her career,

and the strategies which are open to her in dealing with disciplinary exclusions. Crucially, Daly herself reflects on these processes: she is not merely the unfortunate product of circumstance but is able to theorise about those circumstances. By holding both habitus and field in mind, we can get to a more nuanced account of Daly specifically and of feminist intellectual production in general.

Moreover, this chapter argues against any simple conception of Daly's writing *style*: it distances itself from the notion that she constructs an obscure, self-referential universe which few can enter and that, ultimately, she fails to reach out to women – as, for instance, Meaghan Morris argues;² but also from the converse assertion that Daly always produces a joyful, liberating reading experience. In her obituary for Daly, Beverley Clack writes that

the style of her writing stands as a model for how to think creatively. Her writing is bold, funny, challenging. She dares her reader to embrace a different way of writing philosophy; a playful, creative and imaginative philosophy that is as wonderfully weird as it is grounded in the day-to-day experiences of women.³

This is not what I will argue in this chapter. Rather, Daly's writing is interesting to me precisely because I have a fundamentally ambivalent relation to it: at the most elemental level, sometimes I like the way she writes, and sometimes I do not. As a *New Society* reviewer of Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* wrote: 'When I first threw this book across the room I already knew I was going to pick it up again.'⁴

² Meaghan Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, Reading, Postmodernism* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 37-45.

³ Beverley Clack, "'Just Dare and Care': Mary Daly 16 October 1928 – 3 January 2010", *Feminist Theology*, 18.3 (2010), 254-56 (p. 255).

⁴ Cited in Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (London: Women's Press, 1984), p. ii.

In this chapter, then, I hope to avoid two counter narratives which seem (almost) inevitable when we want to talk about Daly. The first is a story which marks her as the epitome of an ethnocentric and insular radical second wave: the 1970s incarnate. Such a depiction presents Daly as paradigmatic of the flaws of the second wave: whether formulated as simple critique or in a more historicist mode, the assertion is that we have rightly moved past ‘Daly’s time’. The second story is what Clare Hemmings has called a *corrective* reading, in which we seek to right the misconceptions of the first story by showing, in this case, that Daly *was really* interested in the experiences of non-white women, or asserting that those who tell the first story have under- or mis-read her. Whilst there is certainly a corrective element to my attempts to establish a more nuanced and sociologically aware account of Daly, and there are points when this chapter will argue that a particular reading of Daly can be challenged, the main task is to seek to understand *why* she might have come to write what she did in the way that she did, and why commentators have come to read her in particular ways.⁵

DALY’S EARLY RELATION TO EDUCATION

In her literary and historical study of Simone de Beauvoir, Toril Moi insists on a reading which marries close analysis of intellectual and literary texts with

⁵ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 12-16. The *absolute* rejection of the corrective mode, for which Hemmings argues here and elsewhere, is not necessarily always desirable, or even possible, as Deborah Withers argues in her review of *Why Stories Matter*. Hemmings’s practice of ‘recitation’, or forming referential links *between* feminists as a counter to dominant stories about the influence of men upon them (in Hemmings’s example, Michel Foucault on Judith Butler: she argues for a strategy in which Monique Wittig is consistently cited as Butler’s primary precursor instead), is read by Withers as a corrective strategy, in as much as it insists on the partiality of a dominant narrative, and introduces possible counter-narratives in order to make our accounts more complete. For Withers, there is nothing unfortunate about this: such corrections are necessary and useful for the historiographical method Hemmings advocates. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a critical intellectual history which does not offer any corrections whatsoever, and it seems right to say that if we are troubled by the poverty of dominant narratives then we need more stories, not fewer. See Deborah M. Withers, ‘Review of *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*’, *European Journal of Feminist Theory*, 19.2 (2012), pp. 253-56 (pp. 255-56).

the development of a sense of the socio-economic and cultural specificities of the intellectual's life. This is not, Moi maintains, because the writer can be *reduced* to the conditions in which she lived, but rather because we need to acknowledge that her work is over-determined: that is, that myriad complex factors feed into intellectual production, and we should not discount the importance of any before analysis.⁶ In this, then, she follows Bourdieu's dual reading method of 'socioanalysis': this is the idea that, by trying to bear the properly textual as well as the socio-economic in mind at once, we can avoid both reductionist attempts to make the socio-economic primary, *and* the converse resistance to any social contextualisation at all. As we saw in Chapter One, an intellectual work can, for Bourdieu, be connected to broader historical and social conditions, but this does not need to reduce it to them. Rather, through understanding an individual as operating in any number of fields at once, we can build up an account of their intellectual output as the complex interplay of relations within and across fields.

In what follows, I will consider Daly's writing and its reception in two subfields of the intellectual field: the theological field and the women's studies field. What is important to hold in mind is that Daly operates differently within these fields: she takes different positions within them according to their broader make-up, which means that her writings are in turn received differently. Further, it is possible to think of Daly as moving in and out of these fields at different points: just as she did not operate as a producer in the intellectual field at all until the 1960s, many of her later works do not seem to be present in the theological field. Conversely, her properly theological works seem to be less often engaged with in the broader women's studies field than her later output, even though those earlier works must surely be considered feminist. During one of her enforced hiatuses from teaching at Boston College,

⁶ Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 29.

Daly's supporters (and Daly herself) wore t-shirts on campus sporting the slogan, 'Where's Mary Daly?' This is the question that I want to answer: *where* is Mary Daly in the intellectual fields in which she operates?

There are many reasons to read *Outercourse*, Daly's autobiography, and one of them is its account of what it meant to be a working-class American Catholic woman and first-generation university student in the academic system in the middle of the twentieth century. What is particularly striking is Daly's fundamental ambivalence toward the educational system: the idea that she might be paid in order to read and think is extraordinary to her, but at the same time she finds it difficult to find a place in the (Catholic) university system. There is an ambivalence, in particular, about the role of her teachers and their limitations, and about the role of the intellectual in society, but she also takes great pride in her work and in the effort it took to produce it: 'In case the reader gets the impression that all this sounds like work, work, work, rest assured, it was. The point is that I *loved* what I was doing.'⁷

At some points she relates her disregard for the educational system, but this is belied or at least complicated by her evident pride in her academic successes. In any number of places she tells us that she has 'six degrees including three doctorates' – this is even mentioned on the back cover of her autobiography. As a relative outsider in this machine she writes insightfully about its structures and limitations, yet she seems to find it difficult to shake off her attachment to formal education in general and the university system in particular.

We can come to a tentative understanding of Daly's complex relationship to her education by thinking it alongside some of Bourdieu's ideas about working-class and petit-bourgeois relations to schooling, and

⁷ See Mary Daly, *Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage. Containing Recollections from my 'Logbook of a Radical Feminist Philosopher' (Being an Account of my Time/Space Travels and Ideas – Then Again, Now and How)* (London: Women's Press, 1993), for example pp. 58-62; 63 (original emphasis).

complicating these with the addition of gender. For Bourdieu, the ‘pre-tension’ of a particular relation to culture – that of the competent, successful petit-bourgeois student with encouraging parents – is always imbued with a fundamental *tension* which is both a limitation to and the motor for success:

If pre-tension forces the petit bourgeois to enter the competition of antagonistic pretensions and pushes him always to live beyond his means, at the cost of a permanent *tension* that is always liable to explode in aggressivity, it is also what gives him the necessary strength to extract from himself, through every form of self-exploitation [...] the economic and cultural means he needs in order to rise.⁸

While we might not want to talk about Daly’s ‘aggressivity’ precisely (though critics have indeed talked about the propensity for extreme anger in her writings), there may be something useful in this characterisation of the fundamental tension of a particular relation to education.⁹ Although the rather European class typology here, which maintains the (often somewhat loaded) category of ‘petit-bourgeois’, cannot be unproblematically transposed onto an American case, it is clear that Daly’s family background is something like upper-working class (neither parent completed high school, and her father was a travelling ice cream freezer salesman); but also that there were *aspirational* aspects to the family which correlate to what Bourdieu here calls the petit-bourgeoisie. Daly talks in her autobiography of her parents’ desire to live in material comfort even if this meant being unable to save for the future,

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984), p. 337 (original emphasis).

⁹ For a criticism of Daly’s anger from a Catholic perspective, see Donna Steichen, *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), pp. 297-99. Perhaps I read too much Daly, but I cannot help noticing (presumably unintentional) irony in Steichen’s title: it sounds more like one of the *Wickedary’s* Background Spin-Offs than genuine condemnation. No doubt Daly would simply agree that she is indeed in an Ungodly Rage. For a partial defence of anger in Daly’s texts (on the grounds that it forced at least some of the theological establishment to pay attention to feminism), see Beverly Wildung Harrison, ‘The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers’, in *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, ed. by Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1990), pp. 194-213 (pp. 196-97).

and of her father's award-winning advertising jingles and self-published book on how to sell ice cream equipment.¹⁰

It is Daly's formidable *aspiration* to be an intellectual which drives her further in the educational system. This is often against quite notable odds: when no American Catholic institution would admit her to study for the PhD in sacred theology, she moved to Switzerland in order to take advantage of more progressive anti-discrimination laws; indeed, she became the first woman in the world to attain this, the highest degree obtainable from a Catholic university. And yet the cost of this *stretching forward* does not appear to be negligible. She talks of the ostracism she suffered in Switzerland from the male seminarians who were her classmates and, in describing the process of writing her sacred theology thesis, she suggests that she had been struggling to convey her meaning in a disciplinary language which she could never quite successfully appropriate.¹¹ While she connects this to both her gender and her emergent feminist politics, it also seems likely that class plays a significant role in some of her difficulties. Indeed, as we will see below, it may be that through these difficulties related to the intersection of gender and class, she comes to develop a relation to language marked by both its (hyper)concern with scholarly conventions, *and* a more playful, 'outsider's' relation to them. As Janet Zandy has noted, language can become a primary concern for working-class academics precisely because of their ambiguous relationship to academic idioms.¹²

Throughout her work, but perhaps especially as she develops a more autobiographical style from the late 1970s, Daly repeatedly makes clear her scholarly training and credentials. In 1999's *Quintessence*, for instance, she

¹⁰ Daly, *Outercourse*, pp. 34; 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹² Janet Zandy, 'Foreword', in *Those Winter Sundays: Female Academics and their Working-Class Parents*, ed. by Kathleen A Welsch (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), pp. vii-viii.

compares recent, 'post-modern' texts unfavourably with Aquinas and Aristotle; and in *Amazon Grace* (2006) she reiterates at some length her understanding of Aquinas's theory of the four causes from *Beyond God the Father*.¹³ In an interview conducted in 2000, Daly makes repeated reference to her scholarly training in Europe and the specific worldview she believes it has given her, and explains that she considers her work better received there than in the US.¹⁴ Here we can see traces, perhaps, of something like the *faith* in institutionalised knowledge, as well as the conspicuous *display* of such knowledge, characteristic of intellectual insecurity, which Bourdieu attributes to the petit-bourgeois relation to culture.¹⁵ Indeed, Daly notes the strange compulsion to *become* boastful in order to assert herself when she takes up an academic post.¹⁶ When we note these characteristics as traces of a classed, aspirational, and insecure habitus, and marry such an understanding with an acknowledgement of the specific workings and restrictions of the different fields in which Daly moves, we can get to a perhaps more charitable, but also more comprehensive apprehension of her increasing alienation from disciplinary centres. This is to claim neither that Daly's work is merely an expression of her classed or gendered experiences of education, nor that she fails to recognise and play with academic mores; rather, it is to claim that, by reading her works with the specificity of her history in mind, we can develop a *fuller* understanding of what she is able to achieve in the fields in which she operates.

¹³ Mary Daly, *Quintessence... Realizing the Archaic Future: Containing Cosmic Comments and Conversations with the Author* (London: Women's Press, 1999), p. 138; *Amazon Grace: Re-Calling the Courage to Sin Big* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 17-29.

¹⁴ Mary Daly with Catherine Madsen, 'The Thin Thread of Conversation: An Interview with Mary Daly', *Cross Currents*, 50.3 (2000) <<http://www.crosscurrents.org/madsenfoo.htm>> [accessed 19 February 2010] (for example, para. 13 of 99).

¹⁵ This is what Bourdieu terms 'cultural good intentions' or 'cultural goodwill'; see, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 23.

¹⁶ Daly, *Outercourse*, p. 89.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS

As has been argued above, the development of Daly's thought and style over time should be related to her personal and institutional history, rather than understood as intellectual degeneration. We need a more nuanced story about Daly than that which insists on a clear descent from the rigour, erudition (and disciplinary appropriateness) of *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1968, to the obscure, other-worldly metaphysics of *Amazon Grace* in 2006. Such a story seems to miss not only the continuity of some of Daly's crucial ideas over time,¹⁷ but also the complexity of her written style and its often ambiguous relation to scholarly tradition. Nonetheless, it would be difficult to read these two books in succession and fail to come to the conclusion that the author has adapted her ideas very markedly over time. By way of introduction, then, we will briefly look at the development of Daly's ideas and style over these five decades.

In her preface to the second edition, Daly relates the events which, in the mid-1960s, led her to write *The Church and the Second Sex*. Completing her third PhD thesis at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, she responded to an article in progressive Catholic journal *Commonweal* by philosopher Rosemary Lauer, which called for (modest) reform to certain structures within the Catholic Church. For Daly, this was the first time it appeared possible to combine her own feminist influences (in particular Simone de Beauvoir) with her Catholic faith, and her *Commonweal* letter of 1965 looked to a future in which women would begin to challenge the Church. This letter in turn inspired an agent from UK publishing house G. Chapman to write to Daly, offering her a contract to write a book on these themes. But it was her witnessing of the Second Vatican Council in Rome in 1965 which she

¹⁷ This point is made by, for instance, Wanda Warren Berry. See her 'Feminist Theology: The "Verbing" of Ultimate/Intimate Reality in Mary Daly', in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, ed. by Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Marilyn Frye (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 27-54 (pp. 31-32).

especially credits with driving her forward to write the book. She relates the fundamental ambiguity of this experience: surrounded by progressive Catholics who were beginning to challenge the authority of the Church, she was imbued with reformist hope; yet those few nuns allowed to be present at some official ceremonies of the Council, known as auditors, were not permitted to speak. Daly's reformist impulse was already being challenged by the reality of the Catholic Church: her habitus, conditioned in a generally progressive Catholic environment, had come into contact with the reality of the Roman orthodoxy at this time.¹⁸

Nonetheless, it is from this reformist Catholic position that *The Church and the Second Sex* can be said to be written. Daly's first book seeks to interrogate the history of the Church as well as its current forms, not in order, ultimately, to condemn it, but to modernise it. Refusing to see the Bible as the definitive word of God, she understands it rather as a historical document which is open to reinterpretation; refusing to accept attempts to portray the history of the Church as an unbroken reiteration of (current) dogma, she relates the complexity and fluidity of that tradition. Whilst these are precisely the kind of moves we might expect a feminist theologian to make, what is remarkable about *The Church and the Second Sex* is that it is the first book-length attempt to do these things: because it is the *first* book which calls itself a work of feminist Christian theology.¹⁹ As will be recounted in greater detail below, the publication of this work created a controversy when Daly's Catholic employer, Boston College, subsequently offered her a one-year terminal contract rather than the tenure she had expected. The resultant series of

¹⁸ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, pp. 5-14 (pp. 7-11). A number of commentators reflect on the 1960s in general and Vatican II in particular as turning points for progressive American Catholicism, initially opening up spaces for dissent but eventually closing them down, and driving many away from the mainstream Church permanently. See Adrian Hastings, 'Catholic History from Vatican I to John Paul II', in *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*, ed. by Adrian Hastings (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 1-13 (p. 6).

¹⁹ See Mary Jo Weaver, 'Feminists and Patriarchs in the Catholic Church: Orthodoxy and its Discontents', in *Catholic Lives, Contemporary America*, ed. by Thomas J. Ferraro (London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 187-204 (p. 191).

protests from students and staff, including some resignations, caused them to retract this contract and indeed offer her tenure. As we will see below, this experience had important repercussions for the direction her work would subsequently take.²⁰

In 1973, Daly published her second book, *Beyond God the Father*, which continued *The Church and the Second Sex's* criticism of the Catholic Church, but now from a more oppositional stance. No longer recognising herself as a member of the mainstream Church, she nonetheless develops a specifically Christian theological perspective, advancing, as we will see below, a kind of theological ontology of transcendence influenced by Paul Tillich. In 1978, Daly published *Gyn/Ecology*, a work taken by some feminists to be the beginning of the end of Daly's advancement of a usable feminist analysis. Here, Daly puts forward the notion that there is a universal system of patriarchy (also referred to as the Sado-Ritual Syndrome) which connects such disparate phenomena as Indian *sati*, Chinese foot-binding, African female genital cutting, and American gynaecology. *Pure Lust*, published in 1984, begins to explore the nature of patriarchal symbolism, myth and language, themes which are to recur throughout her later work, notably 1987's *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*, a dictionary of new 'Spinnings', or takes on patriarchal language which re-imagine the linguistic potential of words; as in:

Prude *n* {derived fr. F *prudefemme* wise or good woman, fr. OF *prode* good, capable, brave + *femme* woman – Webster's [Third New International Dictionary of the English Language]}: Good, capable, brave woman endowed

²⁰ For an early overview of her recurring difficulties with Boston College, see Janice Raymond, 'Mary Daly: A Decade of Academic Harassment and Feminist Survival', in *Handbook for Women Scholars: Strategies for Success*, ed. by Mary L. Spencer, Monika Kehoe, and Karen Speece (San Francisco: Center for Women Scholars, 1982), pp. 81-88. Daly was at odds with the College administration throughout her career and, despite repeated attempts, never made full professor.

with Practical/Passionate Wisdom [...] Lusty woman who insists upon the Integrity, Self-Esteem and Pride of her Sex.²¹

1999's *Quintessence* and 2006's *Amazon Grace* are explorations of contemporary society from Daly's radical feminist perspective; notable for their explorations into an imagined feminist utopia (Lost and Found Continent), as we will see below, these quasi-novels see Daly playing with temporal conventions as she travels through time.

Whether or not we wish to resist readings of Daly's work which note an unequivocal trajectory in her writing, especially when this is understood as increasing intellectual impoverishment and stylistic degeneration, it is nonetheless clear that there are marked compositional and intellectual differences between many of Daly's works, and also that these changes appear to move, broadly, in one direction: away from an *academic* conception of intellectual work, and toward a more polemical one. Beginning with an account of Daly's trajectory through the theological field in which she originally participated as an intellectual producer, and going on to examine her role in the emerging field of women's studies, we will see how institutional conditions affected the changes in her intellectual output which critics often note: specifically, we will see how *habitus* and *field* interact in the development of her written style.

DALY AND THEOLOGICAL HISTORY

In order to think about Daly's position in the theological field, it is useful to consider her presence in introductory theological textbooks and religious and theological histories of recent American history. Such a staging of Daly's

²¹ Mary Daly in cahoots with Jane Caputi, *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* (Boston: Beacon, 1987), p. 157.

presence in the theological field is not designed to be exhaustive, still less to demonstrate comprehensive theological awareness. This is because the present study is a cultural rather than a theological analysis of the field; and an analysis of one particular actor in the field for purposes which are not theological and which are not ultimately or primarily concerned with theological practice. This is a nice way of saying that it is not within my abilities to construct such an analysis, but also that the brief construction below should be sufficient for my purposes, and help us conceptualise Daly as a participant in this disciplinary field.

Mary Jo Weaver, in her 1985 study of prominent progressive Catholic women since Vatican II, notes the startling lack of women in contemporary surveys of the American Catholic scene. James Hennesey's influential *American Catholics*, she notes, contains fewer than fifty items in any direct way pertaining to women, in his index of some 1,300 entries.²² What is equally interesting for the purposes of this study is that Hennesey, in his comprehensive historical review of American Catholics, does not mention Mary Daly. Whilst the ideas of *The Church and the Second Sex* were not necessarily *mainstream* in Catholic America in the 1960s, that work arguably constituted the first book-length, cogent, and accessible argument for gender reform of the Church: an argument which would become a large and influential element in the burgeoning Catholic reformist movement. Indeed, Hennesey discusses at length this movement and its feminist cohort, yet Daly herself, whose ideas were arguably formative in this regard, is not present.²³

Hennesey's is not the only study of Catholic intellectual history in which Daly is not present. Jay Dolan's *The American Catholic Experience* contains a substantive chapter on 'The Catholic Reformation, 1960-84',

²² Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 1.

²³ James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 307-31.

incorporating at least some discussion of the feminist contingent of that movement, but Daly is not included; for Dolan, the ‘awakening [of women’s consciousness] has led to the development of a feminist theological school of thought, the leading representatives of which are Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza’.²⁴ Certainly, Fiorenza and Ruether might be considered leading advocates of the feminist theological movement; but we might compare *feminist* historian of Catholicism Mary Jo Weaver’s assertion that ‘The feminist critique of Roman Catholicism got off to a running start in 1968 with Mary Daly’s groundbreaking book *The Church and the Second Sex*’.²⁵ Adrian Hastings lists a range of luminaries as ‘the Western Catholic *avant-garde*, the post-conciliar network of theologians, religious and committed laity’, but again, Daly is not present.²⁶

Although, as Weaver points out, feminist concerns in general do not tend to feature as *prominent* considerations for non-feminist Catholic narratives, clearly they do feature to some extent. Daly’s absence from these texts, then, cannot straightforwardly be explained by the fact that she was critical of the Church from a feminist perspective. It is also difficult to claim that her early work was significantly less important than that of other prominent feminist theologians who are named in these texts. How, then, might we explain Daly’s apparent absence as a theologian from some mainstream histories of American Catholicism?

The introductory text *The Modern Theologians*, edited by David Ford, seeks to provide students with the context for and crucial ideas of twentieth-century Christian theology. Here we *do* find mention of Daly as a significant contributor to the theological field. In the first edition, published in 1989, we

²⁴ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1985), p. 439.

²⁵ Weaver, ‘Feminists and Patriarchs in the Catholic Church,’ p. 191. In another text, Weaver goes so far as to suggest that Catholic women had the option *either* to follow the Virgin Mary or Mary Daly. See Weaver, *New Catholic Women*, p. 11.

²⁶ Hastings, ‘Catholic History from Vatican I to John Paul II’, pp. 8; 11.

find one chapter on feminism ('Feminist Theology'), contained in the section 'New Challenges in Theology'. Here, then, feminist theology is considered as something of an outsider to the discipline, even whilst it can be discussed in a text about theology in general; and there is not-insubstantial inclusion of Daly here. The second edition of *The Modern Theologians*, published in 1997, constitutes a significantly different text, since many of the chapters are rearranged, new sections are added, and some disappear altogether. In this new edition, the chapter 'Feminist Theology' emerges in the section 'Transregional Movements', no longer containing any mention of Daly, while she *does* crop up in a new chapter, 'Feminist and Womanist Theologies', contained in the new section 'Theologies in North America'. The rearrangement of chapters has resulted in Daly leaving the *general* subfield of feminist theology from the perspective of theology more broadly conceived, and emerging in a geographically circumscribed space of theolog**ies** – that is to say that she is now an advocate of a *specific* kind of feminist theology and is not taken as representative of the feminist theological movement more broadly.²⁷ Daly seems, therefore, to have shifted field-position over time: in as much as she is recognised as an important feminist theologian now, she is still bracketed off as a particular case, and not in any sense typical of feminist theology in general. Given that feminist theologians tend to point to *The Church and the Second Sex* specifically as a foundational and even archetypal text, this bracketing off of Daly in theological histories should be understood in the context of the development of her whole body of work.

If Daly has ceased to be considered *representative* of feminist theology by this point, then this is one potential explanation for her absence from mainstream accounts of Catholic intellectual and theological history. Feminist

²⁷ Compare *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by David F. Ford, 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), with *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by David F. Ford, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

theology itself, even as a marginalised section of the field, may be difficult to ignore from the perspective of mainstream theology; but, given that in the texts above feminism remains a comparatively small section even of considerations of post-conciliar progressive movements, it becomes less surprising that Daly herself is not mentioned. There is a difference, perhaps, between what *The Church and the Second Sex* means in the field, and what Daly herself comes to signify: while her first book may be considered central to the emergence of feminist theology, her movement even further toward the margins of the field, and eventually out of it altogether, means that she is no longer regarded as a central figure for the discipline at all. Through a reading of what happens to her written style in this period, we might begin to comprehend how her own relationship to the field, as well as its relationship to her, is fundamentally altered during this time.

DALY IN THE THEOLOGICAL FIELD

In her 1975 'Feminist Postchristian Introduction' to the second edition of *The Church and the Second Sex*, Daly talks with great insight about her experiences since the book's publication. In particular, she relates the ambivalence of her feelings when she 'won' her first battle against the Boston College administration (that is, when they retracted their initial termination of her contract and instead offered her tenure). While of course surprised and happy at this turn of events, she nonetheless felt that

something had happened to the meaning of 'professor,' to the meaning of 'university,' to the meaning of 'teaching.' The 'professors' from the various 'fields' who had been my judges, the judges of my book, had themselves never written books, nor had they read or understood mine. [...] I began to

understand more about the prevailing 'Beta consciousness' of academics, dwarfed by a system of 'education' which made them unfree, uncourageous, and radically uneducated.²⁸

Here we get a depiction, not only of some of the specifics of the Catholic university system – professors who have never written books – but also of a change in Daly's relation to her field. What I note is not in any sense, at least at this stage, a triumphant feeling in response to these unscholarly and uncourageous professors: rather, Daly seems perplexed and troubled. In her autobiography she would come to depict this transition from the publication of *The Church and the Second Sex* to *Beyond God the Father* as the movement from the First to the Second Spiral Galaxy.²⁹ While I might not depict it in such cosmic terms, there is certainly movement going on here: on my reading, the movement from a well-defined disciplinary centre to a more peripheral and ambiguous intellectual space. No longer fully at home within the theological tradition, she nonetheless has not fully achieved an exodus from the theological field equivalent to that which, in the infamous mass departure from Harvard Memorial Church, she led from mainstream Christianity.³⁰ It is during this period between *The Church and the Second Sex* and *Beyond God the Father*, I want to argue, that the tensions of Daly's relation to the theological field begin to manifest themselves strongly in her writing: her liminality in the field here presenting itself through forms of disciplinary and stylistic ambiguity.

In *Beyond God the Father*, published when she had been on the theology faculty of Boston College for six years, Daly discusses strategies for feminists who continue to work within patriarchal institutions such as

²⁸ Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, p. 13.

²⁹ See Daly, *Outercourse*, p. 7.

³⁰ In 1971, Daly became the first woman to be asked to lead the Sunday service at the Protestant Harvard Memorial Church. Daly did indeed lead the service but, after a speech highly critical of Churches of both Catholic and Protestant persuasion, led a stream of both women and men out of the church as what she termed an 'exodus community'. See *Ibid.*, pp. 137-40.

churches, social movements, and universities. Central to her argument here is *the margin* as to some extent the proper place for feminist movement. Understanding that there are situations in which it is wise to leave such institutions, she nonetheless discusses their peripheries as fruitful sites for feminist activity. Writing specifically on academia, she claims that

women who sit in institutional committee meetings without surrendering to the purposes and goals set forth by the male-dominated structure, are literally working on our own time while perhaps appearing to be working ‘on company time.’ [...] This boundary living is a way of being in and out of ‘the system.’ It entails a refusal of false clarity.³¹

Daly could here be talking about her own relationship to the procedures and routines of academic theology at this stage in her intellectual life. In one sense *outside* the mainstream machinery of both Catholic university structures and the general theological scene, she nonetheless remains within them as both provocateur and accomplice. As well as upsetting the field of academic theology – becoming, as she puts it, something of a cause célèbre through her various skirmishes with Boston College³² – she remains, even stubbornly, within it. Not only does she stay within the Catholic university system throughout her career, teaching new generations of Catholics radical feminist ethics; arguably her writing remains within a specifically theological mode. Certainly by the time of writing *Beyond God the Father*, Daly no longer considers herself within anything like mainstream Catholicism, yet that book is deeply indebted to her theological training. Here, Daly develops the re-appropriation of theological ideas initially touched upon in *The Church and the Second Sex*: she does not simply construct a negative critique of androcentric religion, but rather re-imagines religious stories in the light of a

³¹ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, 2nd edn (London: Women's Press, 1986), p. 43.

³² Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, p. 11.

feminist politics. The story of the Fall, for instance, in Daly's hands becomes the story of man's original fall into misogyny.³³

Daly does not seem explicitly to connect her disillusionment with the theological field after her treatment by Boston College to stark changes in her written work, yet both happen between the publishing of *The Church and the Second Sex* and the writing of *Beyond God the Father*. Thinking about both sets of changes through the work of Bourdieu can help us try to develop ways of understanding how Daly's relation to the theological field altered during this time, as well as the ways in which such changes become manifest in her writing. Again, the point is not to show that the reality of the theological field when Daly joins it as a producer inexorably or unilaterally produces change in habitus, nor that class-conditioned aspects of habitus, such as over-identification with institutionalised education, inevitably set working-class academics up for a fall when they enter such fields; rather, it is the symbiotic interplay between both elements, resulting in adaptation for both, which I wish to trace here.

As we saw in Chapter One, feminists following Bourdieu have sought to emphasise the link between habitus and field as the crucial one for understanding how the dominated come to recognise their domination. When there is a perfect match between the social milieu in which a person's habitus developed and the current structures in which they find themselves, they inhabit the *doxic* relation to the world, which is to say the unquestioning feeling of being entirely at home. As we saw, the idea of a truly *doxic* relation to the world is problematic, since it requires a deeply conservative and ultimately 'primitive' pre-heterodox society, which for Bourdieu is often represented by the Kabyle people of Algeria.³⁴ In order to get at such *doxa*, it is

³³ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 47.

³⁴ See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 172-76.

necessary to privilege continuity at the expense of acknowledgement of social change, thus essentially creating a divide between ‘advanced’ societies with their complex relation to culture, and ‘primitive’ ones with their straightforward conservatism. But nonetheless, if we leave aside Bourdieu’s occasional insistence on *doxa*/heterodox-orthodox as a zero-sum game (in which there is the possibility to be fully and unproblematically immersed in a culture such that there is no critical impulse whatsoever), there remains something useful in thinking about ‘coming to consciousness’ as *a disjuncture between subjective and objective structures*.³⁵ If Daly’s series of negative experiences with the theological field in general and the theology faculty at Boston College in particular caused her substantially to re-think her intellectual but also personal affiliations, we can expect that disjuncture to have caused significant modifications to her writing.

As a contribution to reformist Catholic theologies in the 1960s, *The Church and the Second Sex* is not, for example, committed to either a weak or strong conception of female separatism. Daly writes substantially about the need for assimilation of women into male power structures and of developing solidarity between women and men, with chapter names such as ‘Toward Partnership’.³⁶ But let us compare the following passage from Daly’s second book, which concerns what it means to talk about new ‘worlds’ in relation to feminist consciousness, with considerations on a similar theme in 1999’s *Quintessence*. From *Beyond God the Father* in 1973:

If women can sustain the courage essential to liberation this can give rise to a deeper ‘otherworldliness’ – an awareness that the process of creating a

³⁵ Clearly, the notion of ‘coming to consciousness’ has been extremely important in the history of feminism, especially in the American context. By thinking about this concept through Bourdieu’s ideas I do not mean to suggest that Daly’s new consciousness was somehow false, but rather that there are specific sociological factors feeding into the process.

³⁶ Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, pp. 192-219.

counterworld to the counterfeit 'this world' presented to consciousness by the societal structures that oppress us is participation in eternal life.³⁷

And from *Quintessence*:

Patriarchy is still *there*, of course, whining for our attention, begging for our submission to its ludicrous laws, imploring us to play its games, beseeching us to try to overthrow it. But whenever, wherever women are Wild enough, Wise enough simply to shift our context and our perspective, that state shrivels.³⁸

In terms of content, there is not a world of difference between these passages: in both, Daly posits a metaphysical 'other' world in which women who have come to feminist consciousness might participate, which is in some sense outside reality as it has been constructed by patriarchy. In the first passage, in 1973, however, Daly still understands this world in the language of academic theology. In positing the necessity for courage, she draws on the work of theologian Paul Tillich, and the appeal to eternal life clearly references theological understandings of ontological transcendence. The language is imbued with a specifically theological outlook and the weight of that tradition. By *Quintessence*, however, we have a similar idea expressed in language which is much more difficult to place: there are traces of the tradition of radical feminist poetic polemic, but there is little to suggest a *disciplinary* position from which she speaks. By this stage, Daly's relation to the centre of the theological field is so weak that in a sense she can no longer be said to operate in that field at all. In the earlier *Beyond God the Father*, by contrast, her position is considerably more ambiguous: speaking as a non-Catholic with increasingly radical ideas about the nature of theology and of God, she maintains a strong relation to the disciplinary centre through her use of almost exclusively theological references, and by continuing to write in its

³⁷ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, pp. 30-31.

³⁸ Daly, *Quintessence*, p. 96 (original emphasis).

language. Her aspirations, however, are no longer the comparatively modest reforms and concerns for partnership and assimilation found in *The Church and the Second Sex*; rather she looks for the wholesale transformation of our relation to transcendence. In *Beyond God the Father*, unlike her books before or since, Daly attempts to marry something like the disciplinary rigour of academic theology to her considerable aspiration toward new conceptions of being.

It is specifically in *Beyond God the Father*, I argue, that we begin to see these elements come together in an equivocal relation to the theological field, and a style characterised by scholastic uneasiness. As she writes in her introduction to the second edition of *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1975, the theological field has responded to her work in such a way that she can no longer believe wholeheartedly in the system which has so far provided the bulk of her intellectual nourishment; at the same time, she remains indebted to that system, and within a specifically academic mode of writing. These movements are not caused unilaterally, so that the restrictions of fields leave Daly with little choice but a psychologically ambivalent position in relation to them. They can also be understood as her agential *negotiation* of a difficult situation, and as a quite cogent *strategy* for dealing with institutional problems. It is possible to read *Beyond God the Father* as representative of the pivotal moment in Daly's movement from a clearly defined theological remit to a position on the margins between theology, philosophy, women's studies, and non-academic feminist polemic.

The final sentences of that second book perhaps convey the sense of uneasiness which I am trying to get at here:

There have been and will be conflicts, but the Final Cause causes not by conflict but by attraction. Not by the attraction of a Magnet that is All There, but by the creative drawing power of the Good Who is Self-communicating

Be-ing. Who is the Verb from whom, in whom, and with whom all true movements move.³⁹

If we forget that Daly is still operating in the theological field here, the passage might be interpreted as either incomprehensible or, more likely, as a slightly woolly piece of New Age spiritualism.⁴⁰ But there is a more fruitful reading available to us: Daly seeks a radical feminist ontological politics, but she does so from her position *within* the theological field. She is not, at least at this stage, outside that field, such that she might construct a wholesale critique of it; nor does she put forward, as in *The Church and the Second Sex*, a modestly reformist position which stays more or less within the common-places of Christian thought. And it is this *liminality* which, I want to argue, leads to the fundamental strangeness of the passage, and indeed of the book. Daly's radical feminist ontology and her clear indebtedness to Thomas Aquinas make strange bedfellows. Daly herself recognises that she was attempting something unusual at this time:

my creativity began to find its full range. The result was that in the 1971 and 1972 articles, in *Beyond God the Father*, and in the 'Feminist Postchristian Introduction' I effected a new kind of synthesis of legitimacy and illegitimacy. From a doctrinal/theological perspective I was Way Out, but I was within the range of rigorous reason.⁴¹

Rather than simply understanding this boundary-living as the mark of Daly's unique creativity, however, I am suggesting that she operates within a particular set of constraints. Such constraints make this style, firstly, more likely to emerge in Daly's writing than, for instance, that of a male theologian

³⁹ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 198.

⁴⁰ From a feminist *philosophical* perspective, Rosi Braidotti seems to support the latter reading of Daly's notion of transcendence: see her *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, trans. by Elizabeth Guild (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp. 204-08.

⁴¹ Daly, *Outercourse*, p. 190.

with origins in the intellectual classes; and, secondly, not *straightforwardly* successful in presenting itself as ‘within the range of rigorous reason’.

In *Beyond God the Father*, Daly continues and develops the combination of critical scriptural analysis and progressive religious politics, influenced by liberation theologies, begun in *The Church and the Second Sex*; perhaps the biggest departure in terms of content is the far greater interest in the theology of *transcendence*, inspired in particular by Protestant theologian Paul Tillich.⁴² What this produces in practice is a work of theology much more given over to the metaphysical as a spiritual and feminist orientation to the world. Daly develops a theology in which feminist and religious ontology are one: the properly feminist and the properly spiritual relation to the world concern the transcendence of the self – the *reaching forward* into an unknown spatial and temporal beyond:

When women reach the point of recognizing that we are aliens in this terrain, the sense of transcendence and the surge of hope can be seen as rooted in the power of being, which, perhaps for lack of a better word, some would still call ‘God.’⁴³

Whilst this transcendent and metaphysical relation to the world is in some sense present in *The Church and the Second Sex*, it is in *Beyond God the Father* that we begin to see these concerns take prominence. Indeed, simply comparing the titles gives us a clue about developments in Daly’s scholarly orientations. Such concerns are certainly properly theological, but it is also

⁴² For a useful exposition of Daly’s theological influences and precursors, see Anne-Marie Korte, ‘Deliver Us from Evil: Bad Versus Better Faith in Mary Daly’s Feminist Writings’, trans. by Mischa F. C. Hoyinck, in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, ed. by Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Marilyn Frye (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 76-111 (pp. 78-83).

⁴³ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 28. We can perhaps detect here Daly’s indebtedness to radical and secular theologies of the 1960s, which sought to develop religious understandings which refused to anthropomorphise God; see Weaver, *New Catholic Women*, pp. 147-53. As Daly puts it, ‘it is not necessary to anthropomorphize or to reify transcendence in order to relate to this personally.’ *Beyond God the Father*, p. 33.

possible to read them in terms of the ambivalence toward the theological field which I have so far claimed characterises some of Daly's writing.

In his study of recent developments in radical theology, Richard Griggs discusses at some length Daly's contributions to this tradition. Unlike some other non-feminist studies of recent theological history, his reading considers Daly's work to be significant for the development of Christian thought in the twentieth century. In fact, he considers her writings to be paradigmatic of the radical feminist theological current. But he also claims that something is going on in her work which means it cannot *only* be considered theological: as he puts it, her 'feminism, and the religious thought that goes with it, is the product of a nearly lifelong desire on Daly's part to be a *philosopher*'.⁴⁴ While there might be something simplistic or even contradictory about an assertion that her theology is caused by her philosophical impulse, nonetheless Griggs here points to what Daly herself consistently refers to in her autobiography: her aspirations to the most highly valued scholastic concerns – aspirations consistently thwarted by the circumscriptions of the Catholic educational system.⁴⁵ It is precisely the disjuncture between aspiration and reality – between elements of habitus and elements of field – which cause the changes in Daly's outlook which correspond to the changes in her output.

In her essay 'Gender, Habitus and the Field', Lois McNay argues that it is inadequate to attribute increasing levels of critical self-awareness to the existence of a greater array of cultural representations in advanced capitalism. Such a conception of reflexive modernity fails to account for the complex disparities between subjects' access and relation to new identities; rather, by utilising the concept of field, McNay wishes to show how social theory might

⁴⁴ Richard Griggs, *Gods After God: An Introduction to Contemporary Radical Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 13-14 (my emphasis).

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Daly's discussion of her repeated attempts to study philosophy at school and beyond in *Outercourse*, pp. 22-41.

explain reflexive identities in a way mindful of the social embeddedness of structures of domination:

Thus, women entering the workforce after child-rearing may experience difficulties because their expectations and predispositions constituted largely through the exigencies of the domestic field sit uneasily with the objective requirements of the workplace. At the same time, this dissonance may lead to a greater awareness – what Bourdieu calls the ‘lucidity of the excluded’ – of the shortcomings of a patriarchally defined system of employment. [...] The questioning of conventional notions of femininity does not arise from exposure to identification with a greater array of alternative images of femininity but from *tensions inherent in the concrete negotiation of increasingly conflictual female roles*.⁴⁶

For McNay, following Bourdieu, new forms of female consciousness come not through any radical overhaul of social structures, but through the (always individuated) *negotiation* of newly accessible or modified fields. It is the disjunct between subjective structures of social comprehension (habitus) and objective structures of social organisation (field) which allows for new critical and self-reflexive identities to emerge.

When Daly writes that, after the response from her colleagues to *The Church and the Second Sex*, ‘something had happened to the meaning of “professor,” to the meaning of “university,” to the meaning of “teaching,”’ she relates the beginnings of a disjuncture between her subjective understanding of the academic system – as rigorous, open, and the repository for all her ‘youthful’ aspirations⁴⁷ – and the objective structures she had to face as a working-class woman and a feminist when she entered the theological field.

⁴⁶ Lois McNay, ‘Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16.1 (1999), pp. 95-117 (pp. 110-11; my emphasis).

⁴⁷ See, for instance, her account of following high school students as a child, hoping to contract their scholarly knowledge. Daly, *Outercourse*, p. 26. ‘Youthful’ is in inverted commas here since it is easy to forget that, due to the number of degrees she obtained, Daly did not take up her first academic post until she was almost forty.

Expecting an intellectual climate in which her ideas would be dispassionately judged on their theological merits, she is instead faced with the enormous political complexity of the Catholic theological field, negotiating both scholarly and doctrinal concerns.

It is possible to read Daly's rather bruised account of this disjuncture as connected to the over-identification with educational institutions associated, for Bourdieu, with those whose capital is largely dependent upon them. Certainly, Daly's accrual of degrees far beyond what was necessary to attain an academic post in a Catholic college in the 1960s can be read as a misrecognition of the functioning of intellectual fields and the forms of capital most highly regarded within them. Such over-identification with these structures makes difficulties such as her professional problems with Boston College, and the rejection of her work by large sections of the women's studies field which we will look at below, even more challenging for Daly than they would be otherwise. Indeed, as we will see in the analysis of Judith Butler's career in Chapter Three, habitus produced in more favourable class and educational conditions is able to adapt to institutional difficulties with significantly more finesse, and success. At *this* stage, however, Daly remains in some senses committed to her 'properly' theological endeavours, even as she begins to question notions of scholastic rigour. There is no wholesale transformation of her political or professional identity but rather, in line with McNay's arguments, the development of an ambiguous, *negotiated* form of intellectual reflexivity.

We might compare this negotiated identity with Daly's stated relation to the theological field in her *later* works. Unlike the sense of liminality we get in *Beyond God the Father* and the 'Feminist Postchristian Introduction' to *The Church and the Second Sex's* second edition, Daly here conveys in a much more straightforward way her sense of living *outside* the structures of

patriarchy, academic rigour, and mainstream religion. While in her autobiography she discusses the ambivalence of *Beyond God the Father's* relation to scholarly tradition, in 1984's *Pure Lust* she claims that, 'In keeping with the tradition of Methodicide, this book is a work of studied *errata*. [...] From the patriarchal perspective [...] it is, quite simply and entirely, a Mistake.'⁴⁸ In *Beyond God the Father* in 1973, Daly's sense of self can be said to remain connected to her theological training and belief in the university system. Even whilst she experiences the disjuncture between her subjective sense of what these mean and the concrete theological structures which circumscribe her efforts, she remains on the peripheries of the theological field, and her aspirations remain theological. It is this scholastic aspiration which is perhaps the major difference between the work Daly seeks to achieve in *Beyond God the Father* and that which comes later. At this stage she maintains such aspirations *even though* she has experienced major setbacks. As Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron claim in *The Inheritors*, material setbacks do not necessarily effect straightforward, concomitant diminutions in aspiration:

When this 'broken trajectory' effect occurs [...] the agent's aspirations, flying on above his real trajectory like a projectile carried on by its own inertia, describe an ideal trajectory that is no less real or is at any rate in no way imaginary, in the ordinary sense of the word.⁴⁹

And yet by *Pure Lust*, in 1984, this aspirational relation to the theological field seems no longer to be in evidence. Rather, it is quite possible to claim that Daly no longer operates in the theological field at all. When she says that the book is a mistake by ordinary scholarly standards, it is quite clear that she means this as an accolade. In Bourdieusian terms, we might

⁴⁸ Daly, *Pure Lust*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ Bourdieu and Passeron, *The Inheritors*, p. 86.

understand Daly's movement out of the field (or, as she might put it, into a different universe) as the eventual reconciliation of her subjective ambitions to her objective chances of attaining theological legitimacy as a radical feminist.⁵⁰ This is a considerably more negative reading of Daly's movement than she would offer herself; as she would see it, she has Spun Out from the restrictions of 'academentia' into the absolute and *authentic* freedom of radical Be-ing:

I have Moved beyond 'following' or simply reacting to patriarchally defined methods of thinking, writing, public speaking, and teaching. My activity in this has become more approximate to my ideal of Be-Dazzling – eclipsing the foreground world with the brilliance of be-ing.⁵¹

Although in one sense far more radical than her aspirations in the earlier, theological works, in another sense Daly's ambitions seem considerably reduced. As will be discussed below, a number of feminists have criticised these later writings for amounting to narcissistic, self-referential polemics which can only ever appeal to the initiated. Daly no longer aspires to participate in academic fields, and so can no longer substantively change them. No longer a player in theological games, she can, as we saw above, be omitted altogether from theological histories. Rather than interpret such changes as marks of either pure volition or intellectual decline, we should look to the disciplinary, political, and socio-economic conditions she in fact had to negotiate.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, 'The School as a Conservative Force: Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities', trans. by J. C. Whitehouse, in *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education: A Selection of Contemporary Research Papers Together with Some of the Formative Writings of the Recent Past*, ed. by John Eggleston (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 32-46 (p. 35).

⁵¹ Daly, *Outercourse*, p. 8.

DALY WITHIN WOMEN'S STUDIES

In the previous section, I argued that when we read *Beyond God the Father* as a pivotal intellectual marker in Daly's trajectory, alongside a biographical account of the conditions of her intellectual production in the mid-1970s, we get to an understanding of her whole intellectual history. *Beyond God the Father's* disciplinary liminality and ambivalence can tell us most, I have argued, about the direction in which Daly was heading and the reasons for it. By contrast, for many feminist critics and commentators, it is *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), Daly's third and most infamous book, which most clearly marks a shift in her thinking, as we will see below. It is this book which is often cast in contradistinction to *The Church and the Second Sex* and *Beyond God the Father*, which are grouped together as usable and scholarly feminist sources. *Gyn/Ecology*, conversely, marks the beginning of the end of Daly's production of such useful texts.

In this section, I will argue that when feminists construct the later work beginning with *Gyn/Ecology* as fundamentally divorced from that which came before, they reinforce less a separation of Daly's substantive ideas than of the stylistic forms they take. It is a perceived abandonment of a specific scholarly (that is, disciplined) orientation to her content which often leads to criticism. In *Beyond God the Father*, Daly's more radical ideas are tempered by observance of intellectual mores: not only qualification of speculation but also tighter definitions of words and more consistent citation practices. By *Gyn/Ecology* in 1978, she is no longer circumscribed by the theological field, despite continuing to work in a theology faculty (as a tenured academic, and a seemingly particularly stubborn one at that, she could not be ousted easily from her position at Boston College, despite repeated attempts): she has by now given up the liminal position on the margins of theology which marks *Beyond God the Father's* style. I argue that the stylistic 'failings' of the later

work beginning with *Gyn/Ecology* which many feminists note – speculation, hyperbole, insularity, self-reference, polemicism, and a general lack of scholarly rigour – should be understood not simply as a voluntarist rejection of academic good form in general, but more specifically as symptomatic of Daly’s increasing alienation from the theological field, and emergence into the very new and initially ill-defined field of women’s studies. *The Church and the Second Sex* can be said to have been published before women’s studies existed as a demarcated academic field – the first programmes explicitly named women’s studies being instigated in 1970 in the US and not until 1984 in the UK – and although in conversation with the women’s movement broadly conceived, academically speaking remains delimited by theology. By *Beyond God the Father*, the idea of an academic women’s studies field has some limited currency: Daly is in dialogue with a variety of feminist scholars as well as theologians, while in *The Church and the Second Sex*, the only feminist with whom she had substantively engaged is Simone de Beauvoir. As she becomes increasingly disillusioned with theology as medium for her work, Daly can be said to enter the women’s studies field (at its inception), helping to construct it through her various feminist engagements, even as she is simultaneously constructed by it.

Feminist accounts of Daly’s trajectory which stress a radical disjuncture between her second and third books, and which are highly critical of that turn, tend to miss the specificity of her educational experiences, the ways in which the early work is circumscribed by theology in particular, the fluidity and haziness of women’s studies as a discipline in the 1970s and its impact on the types of work being produced, and the *effects* of Daly’s casting out from a collectively emerging sense of ‘women’s studies proper’, as well as the ambiguous and gradual nature of such changes. Nonetheless, such feminist constructions of Daly’s trajectory are themselves important in telling

us about the make-up of the women's studies field and the positioning of Daly within it, and so it is important to trace this common reading of her work. By understanding women's studies as a discrete intellectual field – as a series of relations between actors with a specific set of concerns, interests, and focuses, therefore vying for position in similar social spaces – we can try to understand Daly's role, not only as a theologian in that more traditional intellectual field, but also as a women's studies scholar taking up a very specific position in the women's studies field. How, then, is Daly *constitutive of* as well as *constituted by* this field?

When thinking about the construction of Daly in women's studies, it is almost impossible not to talk about Audre Lorde. This is because, from the perspective of women's studies, it is quite possible to argue that the most extraordinary and important thing about Daly is Lorde's 1979 'Open Letter' to her. The eloquence, poignancy and, arguably, *timeliness* of that letter means that it is known to almost every Western feminist as a crucial marker in feminist movement away from the white-centric, essentialist, radical feminism of the 1970s.⁵² Equally important for this analysis, perhaps, is that the open letter is a response to 1978's *Gyn/Ecology* rather than another of Daly's books.

Lorde's letter, which she sent to Daly personally in 1979, is a deeply affecting response to *Gyn/Ecology* which conveys Lorde's immense respect for that work, as well as her misgivings about a number of its elements. In Lorde's reading, the book does necessary work in seeking to synthesise analyses of apparently disparate oppressive practices, and in its attempts to create positive feminist mythologies through a discussion of female goddesses.

⁵² I suggest the letter's timeliness here because, as Clare Hemmings has recently argued, it is the 1980s which are coded as the decade of black and lesbian identity politics in the feminist imaginary. See Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, p. 5. In a recent article exploring the possibility of 'interracial' feminist conversations, Joycelyn Moody and Sarah Robbins concentrate on 1979 in general, and the 'Open Letter' in particular, as rhetorical shorthand for white-centrism in the movement. Joycelyn Moody and Sarah R. Robbins, 'Seeking Trust and Commitment in Women's Interracial Collaboration in the Nineteenth Century and Today', *MELUS*, 38.1 (2013), 50-75 (p. 68 *et passim*).

However, Daly's work remains limited because all of these goddess images come from the European traditions; and because Daly has used the work of women of colour, including Lorde herself, to bear witness only to the historically and geographically varied nature of female *victimhood*. Such a division in her use of white and non-white sources, Lorde's analysis maintains, illustrates Daly's blindness to differences between women's experiences of patriarchy, which cannot be alleviated simply by appeals to global sisterhood:

The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those differences. Nor do the reservoirs of our ancient powers know these boundaries. To deal with one without even alluding to the other is to distort our commonality as well as our difference.

For then beyond sisterhood there is still racism.⁵³

It is the case that, in *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly develops an understanding of gender relations in which patriarchy is read, firstly, as a *global* force for ill; and, secondly, as the primary axis of domination upon which all other oppressive structures (including colonialism and racism) model themselves. In fact Daly is quite unambiguous about these points: the passage from which Lorde paraphrases includes the statement that

Those who claim to see racism and/or imperialism in my indictment of these atrocities [including *satī* and female genital cutting] can do so only by blinding themselves to the fact that the oppression of women knows no ethnic, national, or religious bounds. There are variations on the theme of oppression, but the phenomenon is planetary.⁵⁴

⁵³ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: Crossing, 2007), p. 70.

⁵⁴ Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, 2nd edn (London: Women's Press, 1991), p. 111.

It would be difficult to attempt a corrective reading of *Gyn/Ecology* in order to claim that Lorde has misread the work, then, and we might wonder about the political motivations for such a correction. But it is quite possible to question the uses to which this letter has been subsequently put in the women's studies field. As Amber Katherine has argued, the letter is born of a particular set of *continuities* as well as differences between Lorde and Daly, including commitments to woman-identification, goddess imagery, and the concept of sisterhood. For Katherine, Lorde's analysis is so remarkably considerate, careful, and balanced because it sought to *engage* Daly in a series of discussions which were at this time still only just being formed in the minds of black women in the second wave: concerns about the blindness to inequalities between women in the mainstream feminist movement. Rather than simply condemning Daly, Katherine argues, we should try to understand how the specifics of that moment made it difficult for her to respond in kind, or even really to understand what Lorde was trying to articulate about the complex relation between gendered and other forms of oppression.⁵⁵

Yet for some feminists, it is possible to argue, Lorde's letter can instead come to *speak for* the movement toward difference after the feminist seventies. Instead of the intimate request for engagement with complex formulations of intersectional oppression and privilege which Katherine detects, the letter is read in oppositional terms: through Lorde we come to understand ourselves as on the side of complex, racially-sensitive *right*, as against Daly's simplistic and privileged wrong. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, argues that Lorde's 'objection' to Daly helps us to see the latter's 'utter

⁵⁵ Amber L. Katherine, "A Too Early Morning": Audre Lorde's "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" and Daly's Decision Not to Respond in Kind', in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, ed. by Hoagland and Frye, pp. 266-97 (pp. 287-94). In the course of researching her biography of Lorde, Alexis De Veaux in fact discovered a response from Daly amongst the former's papers, belying Lorde's claim that no response was ever received. We will never know Lorde's reasons for this, and it would be deeply problematic to suggest, as Daly did herself in her final book *Amazon Grace*, that the discovery of the response somehow vindicates the latter's position. See Alexis De Veaux, *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde* (New York: Morton, 2004), pp. 246-48; and Mary Daly, *Amazon Grace*, pp. 24-26.

indifference to the sensitive issue of racial differences': we could argue that Braidotti seems to miss the subtlety of Lorde's argument in an account which locates racial blindness quite squarely and *specifically* at Daly's door.⁵⁶ Such arguments serve not only to reduce the complexities of *this* debate: they arguably come to bolster a much more general progress narrative, from the myopia of 1970s radicalism to the subtlety of third-wave *difference*.⁵⁷ Katherine relates the impulse to give women's studies undergraduates the letter as a 'sign-post' to help them get to grips with recent feminist history, and those students' concomitant understandings of the radical 1970s as 'just racist'.⁵⁸

Lorde's letter, then, seems to do important work for the construction of the feminist past, and the positioning of Daly in particular. Further, for the purposes of this chapter it is interesting that Lorde's letter is used in these ways because it is specifically *Gyn/Ecology* which comes to be understood as representative of the racial privilege of the mainstream 1970s movement. Whilst clearly Lorde *was* responding to that book in particular, what is sometimes maintained in feminist readings of Daly through Lorde is that *Gyn/Ecology* marks a break with the ideas of her first two books. Indeed, we saw above that Daly does go through enormous changes in the period between *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1968 and *Gyn/Ecology* ten years later; but we also saw that this change is ambiguous, fluid, and gradual. Certainly her conception that gender is the primary axis of oppression in the world, and her

⁵⁶ Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 207. Ellen Armour makes the point that Braidotti's brief discussion of Lorde's letter is in fact the only reference to racially-specific difference in the entirety of the book. There is an especial irony in this, since one of Lorde's speculations was that Daly had merely flicked through the former's books in order to find suitable epigraphs. See Ellen T. Armour, *Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference: Subverting the Race/Gender Divide* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 23. Similar arguments could very easily be levelled against my own inclusion of Lorde here (hence, perhaps, my literal relegation of the point to the margins): however, since it is Lorde's analysis which has come to stand in some feminist quarters for the correct reading of Daly, I include it because it is pivotal in a common 'Daly narrative'. Other criticisms of Daly's work regarding its insensitivity to issues of race do not, I argue, come to fulfil the role of feminist common-place in the same way as Lorde's.

⁵⁷ See Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, pp. 42-48.

⁵⁸ Katherine, "A Too Early Morning", p. 267.

attendant lack of reflection on how this impacts on women experiencing complex forms of domination, is present in 1973's *Beyond God the Father*:

there is danger of settling for mere reform, reflected in the phenomenon of 'crossing,' that is, of attempting to use the oppressor's weapons against him. Black theology's image of the Black God illustrates this. It can legitimately be argued that a transsexual operation upon 'God,' changing 'him' to 'her,' would be a far more profound alteration than a *mere pigmentation change*.⁵⁹

There is an evident hierarchy here between gender as a 'profound' marker of social differentiation, and race as 'mere pigmentation'. It is therefore difficult to argue that, in terms of *concrete ideas*, *Gyn/Ecology* marks a specific schism with Daly's earlier work. Yet there is the spectre of precisely this reading in many feminists' engagement with Daly. Susan Henking, for instance, has recently argued that *Gyn/Ecology* contains a substantive modification of *Beyond God the Father*'s earlier conception of 'authentic' feminist being; and Meaghan Morris focuses almost entirely on *Gyn/Ecology* in her critique of Daly's later thought.⁶⁰ What, then, are the specific differences being pointed to in such histories, and how might they be connected to the disciplining of women's studies?

One of the most common criticisms levelled against Daly from a feminist perspective is that, beginning with *Gyn/Ecology*, her work descends from scholarly rigour into a kind of fuzzy, unacademic muddle. For instance, June Sawyers's review of Daly's last book, *Amazon Grace*, notes in a humorous manner that she employs 'everything from quantum theory to Thomistic philosophy' in her analysis. In a more considered tone, Beverly Wildung Harrison argues that Daly's infamous miscount of the number of

⁵⁹ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 19 (my emphasis).

⁶⁰ Susan E. Henking, 'The Personal Is the Theological: Autobiographical Acts in Contemporary Feminist Theory', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 59.3 (2010), 511-25 (p. 520); Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*, pp. 27-50.

witches burnt in Europe during the middle ages (in *Gyn/Ecology*) does her a disservice precisely because it opens her up to easy criticisms which fail to engage with her substantive *ideas*.⁶¹ Again, the point is not to argue that such understandings of her work are incorrect, but rather to try to understand, firstly, what specific, historical changes they refer to; and, secondly, to view them as both constituted by and constitutive of Daly's position-taking in the women's studies field. Again, I seek to argue that rather than *Gyn/Ecology*, it is *Beyond God the Father* which can show us most about the particularity of her movement through fields.

As an example, we can look to Daly's conception of an ancient, more or less universal matriarchal system which preceded patriarchy, taken in large part from Elizabeth Gould Davis's *The First Sex*.⁶² Her considerations of the possibility of such a system do not emerge in *Gyn/Ecology*, but are rather present in a similar argument in *Beyond God the Father*. The difference is one of hedging, or something like scholastic prudence. In *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), ancient matriarchy is present as a distinct historical *probability*; by *Quintessence* in 1999, in this context, 'Women who have not had the opportunity to look carefully into the scholarly sources *can Sense* intuitively the truth of our origins.'⁶³ In the earlier *Beyond God the Father*, however, a positive argument for the probability of ancient matriarchy is tempered by a consideration of the importance of both looking at the evidence, and avoiding a simple dismissal:

I refer to the silence about women's historical existence *since* the dawn of patriarchy also because this opens the way to overcoming another 'Great Silence,' that is, concerning the increasing indications that there was a

⁶¹ June Sawyers, 'Review of *Amazon Grace: Re-Calling the Courage to Sin Big*', *Booklist*, 102.11 (2006), p. 9 (p. 9); Harrison, 'The Power of Anger in the Work of Love', p. 308 n. 3-4.

⁶² Elizabeth Gould Davis, *The First Sex* (New York: Putnam, 1971).

⁶³ Daly, *Quintessence*, p. 133 (original emphasis).

universally matriarchal world which prevailed before the descent into hierarchical dominion by males. [...]

It is important not to become *super*-cautious and hesitant in looking at the evidence offered for ancient matriarchy. It is essential to be aware that we have been conditioned to fear proposing any theory that supports feminism.⁶⁴

The substantive argument does not significantly change: what we have lost by *Quintessence* is the aspiration toward 'rigour' as a sort of appearance of respectability. This is not to say that the earlier hedging does not do important work in helping the reader understand the limitations of research in this area, but rather that we are here in the realms of scholastic good form, which compels Daly to write in a way which *shows* her reservations about the evidence for an argument which she nonetheless makes. Here as elsewhere, *Beyond God the Father* maintains its combination of radical feminist politics and observance of something like rigour as a scholarly virtue.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that academic feminist critiques of Daly's later work often perform specific types of *police work* for the field of women's studies: they externalise Daly from the disciplinary space and so enforce a particular conception of 'women's studies proper'. As women's studies has become increasingly cohesive as a discrete disciplinary field since the 1970s, so it has had to deal with the contradictions arising from the combination of critical and often anti-institutional politics with the police work necessary for disciplinary maintenance. Criticisms of Daly's lack of scholarly good form, beginning with critical responses to *Gyn/Ecology* in 1978, place her outside the dialogue of women's studies proper, even though it is difficult to account for the orientation of that book unless we allow for a discrete field of endeavour for academic feminism, due to the sources that

⁶⁴ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, pp. 93-94 (original emphases).

Daly cites, and its otherwise rather eclectic interdisciplinarity. Scholastic bad form is excluded from the legitimate practice of women's studies, because of the field's relative precariousness in institutional spaces and other quite legible reasons, outlined more fully in Chapter Four. Such an exclusionary process is not unilateral: Daly comes to construct *herself* as outside women's studies (and in the rather more difficult to place realms of 'real world feminism'), and rather defensively seems to reject the whole notion of academic feminism, despite the fact that she remains an academic writing feminist books. As one of the few strategies open to her at this point, this protectionist method of self-positioning can be read as broadly ineffectual, or at least as significantly less effective than that of Judith Butler, who as we will see in Chapter Three, is able to use her broad range of capital to convert similar disciplinary exclusions into a new role as a general intellectual.

As part of her argument that Daly's style ultimately excludes many women, Meaghan Morris relates an anecdote in which Daly is giving a talk in Sydney. Whilst recounting some of her *Gyn/Ecological* ideas, she is challenged by a member of the audience who interjects, 'Mary, you're not speaking to *me*.' Daly's response is straightforward: the speaker has the choice either to stay and listen, or to leave. For Morris, this dichotomy represents Daly's basic separation of herself 'not just from men, not just from most women, but also *from other forms of feminism*'. Problematised here is Daly's us-and-them mentality, constructed as a barrier to genuine dialogue between feminists.⁶⁵ Similarly, Jane Hedley formulates a teleology of Daly's work in which her system becomes increasingly closed to feminist heterogeneity, such that it comes to obey only its own internal logic. She suggests, firstly, that there is a steady progression (or regression) in this direction, so that 'as we proceed through Daly's writings chronologically we can [...] see the *Wickedary*

⁶⁵ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*, pp. 39; 45 (original emphases).

coming', and, secondly, that such internal reasoning means that in the end Daly's conception of 'women's community' is essentially a figment of her imagination: a fiction.⁶⁶ These understandings of Daly *place her outside the dialogue of women's studies by the very moves which insist that she has placed herself outside that dialogue*. The criticisms certainly do not *precede* the problems of insularity and self-reference in Daly's work, but they do *maintain* Daly's position as outside of women's studies. Reading the criticisms in conjunction with Daly's own works will help us see the symbiotic nature of this process of exclusion.

One of the central conceits of Daly's later work is reference to *herself*, sometimes in the third person. This tendency is often alluded to by those who criticise the generally inward-looking nature of her work, as well as those who more straightforwardly consider her a bad writer. In the epigraph to this chapter, for instance, Daly recounts what she takes to be probable responses to her 'Feminist Postchristian Introduction' to *The Church and the Second Sex*'s second edition. In this piece in general she discusses the writer of the original text in the third person, offering a review of the book from the perspective of 1975 AF (After Feminism). This technique leads to a series of slightly odd and reasonably amusing juxtapositions:

The biographical data accessible to me concerning the author indicates that she was not an overly modest person, so I don't think she would mind my saying that she helped to build a tradition in which I now participate. I would be less than just if I failed to acknowledge this.⁶⁷

As in my epigraph, Daly manages to temper the degree of narcissism in this passage with self-reflexivity and humour. She makes an appeal to the

⁶⁶ Jane Hedley, 'Surviving to Speak New Language: Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich', in *Language and Liberation: Feminism, Philosophy and Language*, ed. by Christina Hendricks and Kelly Oliver (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 99-127 (pp. 110; 111).

⁶⁷ Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, p. 47.

importance of her work, but she does so in a way which suggests that she does not wish simply to tell the reader how important it is; and, connected to this, in a way which probably deflects criticism from the act. As I argued in the previous section, this *ambivalent* relation to her own aspirations can be considered most prevalent in the mid-1970s – as a marker of Daly’s particular relation to the theological field at this time. Similarly, in the women’s studies field, the form of Daly’s self-referentiality in *Beyond God the Father* (1973) and the ‘Feminist Postchristian Introduction’ (1975) can be considered significantly more successful than that in her later works.

We begin to get a sense of Daly’s self-referentiality in an epigraph to the chapter ‘The Final Cause’ in *Beyond God the Father*. Here, amongst tributes to Herbert Marcuse and Sylvia Plath, we read a quotation succeeded simply by ‘Myself’. Whilst this self-inclusion is no doubt unusual for a theological work, it remains a fairly modest act of self-reference.⁶⁸ In the ‘Feminist Postchristian Introduction’ two years later, as we have seen, Daly develops a more sustained mode of discussing herself, but, unlike in later works, such self-reference is modified by self-reflexivity as well as irony. She takes a step back at one point, noting that she ‘must not be carried away with this fantasy conversation’.⁶⁹

No such reservations by the publication of *Quintessence* in 1999. Almost half of the book is given over to ‘Cosmic Comments and Conversations in 2048 BE’ (Biophilic Era) regarding each chapter, in which Daly travels to a gynocentric otherworld in the near future. Here she converses with a variety of women about the dire state of things in 1999, about the utopic future in Lost and Found Continent, and, crucially, about the meaning and importance of her own books. The idea is that these sections constitute commentaries for the

⁶⁸ Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 179.

⁶⁹ Daly, *The Church and Second Sex*, p. 22.

fiftieth anniversary edition;⁷⁰ indeed, this idea of writing ‘reintroductions’ for later editions of her books, in which she often engages with herself in the third person, is quite characteristic of her work. A number of feminist reviewers of *Quintessence*, however, relate the sense that these self-reflections serve to diminish the quality of Daly’s work, producing a theoretical flatness, and a relation to the world with which it is difficult to engage. Lee Reilly, for instance, discusses the time-travel conceit as the mark of a failed utopian novel; Lise Weil, who notes that she finds aspects of *Quintessence* deeply enjoyable, nonetheless criticises its forays into the future as often both contrived and self-indulgent.⁷¹

What the feminist critiques above point to is what is taken to be Daly’s attempt to resist analysis and criticism by constructing a self-referential world impervious to outside investigation. As in Morris’s anecdote in which Daly urges a dissenter from the audience either to sit and listen or to leave, we get an image of Daly, firstly, as *intentionally* unsisterly and indifferent to the feminist formulations and experiences of others; and, secondly, as thereby out of step with the prevailing feminist mood. Again, Daly is thus placed outside dialogue with others in the women’s studies field by the very move which asserts that she has placed *herself* outside of this dialogue. This is not to claim that the criticisms precede the problems in Daly’s work, but rather that her marginal position in the field is maintained by a discourse of theoretical closure, self-referentiality, and self-indulgence. In particular, the implied notion that Daly *intentionally* produces such theory might serve as a block to a fully engaged stance on her work: one in which the particularity of her social, educational, and cultural circumstances are taken into account. If Daly

⁷⁰ Interestingly, my university library catalogue does in fact list the publication date for *Quintessence* as 2048 BE.

⁷¹ Lee Reilly, ‘Review of *Quintessence... Realizing the Archaic Future: A Radical Elemental Feminist Manifesto*’, *Booklist*, 95.2 (1998), 175-76 (p. 176); Lise Weil, ‘Leaps of Faith’, *Women’s Review of Books*, 16.6 (1999), 21-22 (p. 22).

increasingly fails to relate to other feminist scholars in her work, it seems deeply important to ask why such a change may have come about. Daly's friend Adrienne Rich suggests just such a fruitful engagement with the more problematic aspects of her work in a letter to Audre Lorde, asking the latter to understand that Daly's theoretical defensiveness stems in part from a class-bound intellectual vulnerability.⁷²

This disciplinary exclusion (and self-exclusion) is often complemented by an appeal to notions of feminist history and time: that is, the spatial exclusion is married to a temporal exclusion, which keeps Daly in a specific past (the radical 1970s). Meaghan Morris, in her reading of *Gyn/Ecology*, focuses particularly on Daly's use of language, which she holds to be elitist, circular and, in the end, hermetically sealed to any pollution from other women's linguistic formations:

It is a drama of discourse as an Anti-communication: a celebration of the State of Complete Closure constituted by the *Gyn/Ecological* speaking position. [...] But [...] it is the function of a largely untransformed romantic discourse on meaning which concerns me most: a romantic speaking-position, and a romantic position on speaking.⁷³

Certainly, there are problematic aspects of Daly's writing at this stage. Nonetheless, in Morris's analysis we might also get to the nub of a particular positioning of Daly in the women's studies field: the notion that Daly's speaking position is *untransformed*. Clearly, Morris is alleging a *specific* failure to transform here: that is, Daly's continuation of a romantic or idealist mode of speech. Such a criticism of her language could be communicated in a way which does not appeal to historical narrative: in Morris's formulation, however, the notion of *transformation* holds Daly to account, in part, for

⁷² Cited in De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, p. 248.

⁷³ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*, p. 40.

maintaining a relation to language which is not of the moment. The straightforward problematisation of Daly's language is, then, supplemented by an appeal to theoretical timeliness. Daly's thought is untransformed, with repercussions of 'unreconstructed', 'anomalous', and 'anachronistic'. Although it may appear that I am overburdening this word, I believe it points to something much broader about the way that we, as feminists, deal with the feminist past, and Daly's position within it. Further, such understandings of feminist chronology (and her own 'anachronistic' status) ultimately feed into Daly's understanding of women's studies and herself.

Ending an interview with her in 2000, Catherine Madsen points to the curious anachronism of Mary Daly, still somehow remaining oblivious to the lessons of recent theoretical history:

What struck me most frequently about her quickness of mind, her unassuming charisma, her mild, immovable purpose, was her essential innocence: it does not occur to her, it cannot be made to occur to her, that words may have consequences the writer doesn't intend. If, for myself, I consider that innocence well lost, there's still something moving about seeing someone who has it.⁷⁴

Daly's relation to this notion of non-timeliness is ambiguous. Her later work (in particular 1999's *Quintessence*, with its subtitle *Realizing the Archaic Future*, and 2006's *Amazon Grace*) very explicitly plays with notions of correct and incorrect time and, in particular, problematises the idea that feminists must progress through time in a linear fashion.⁷⁵ She defines 'outercourse', for instance, as the spinning out of feminists into a new conception of time resistant to any straightforward linearity:

⁷⁴ Daly with Madsen, 'The Thin Thread of Conversation' (para. 10 of 99).

⁷⁵ See, for instance, Daly, *Quintessence*, p. 27.

It is the Time Travel of those who are learning to become Counterclock-Wise, that is, knowing how to Live, Move, Act in Fairy Time/Tidal Time. It is the direction of Sibyls and Crones who persist in asking Counterclock Whys, Questions which whirl the Questioners beyond the boundaries of clockocracy and into the flow of Tidal Time.⁷⁶

In such moments, the feminist positioning of her as an inhabitant of the past will simply wash over Daly and her own formulation of time which refuses narratives of progress or loss. Yet elsewhere she sets out a very familiar narrative of feminist and more broadly political progress and decline, comparing the 1980s and 90s to the 40s and 50s as troughs of consciousness either side of a great peak.⁷⁷ Although such a narrative is in contrast to feminist stories about movement toward theoretical sophistication as a chronology of progress, it nonetheless feeds into a similar account of the unambiguous theoretical and political *content* of feminist decades. In such instances, Daly works with her critics to reinforce the notion that she remains somehow ‘of the 1970s.

Similarly, Daly latterly attempts to distance herself from the field of women’s studies as it has become, and in so doing, reinforces her exclusion from the field. She uses humour in *Quintessence* to criticise those she describes as ‘postmodern feminists’ for peddling a form of anti-feminism hiding behind jargonistic ‘theory’. Utilising a mocking tone, she constructs an image of such feminists as out of touch with the real world: products only of the ‘academented’ university system, they wish to replace the word ‘women’ with ‘persons gendered as feminine’.⁷⁸ This humorous relation to the centre of the women’s studies field, however, seems to fail as a piece of analysis on a number of counts, not least that by painting a caricature of such feminists, she

⁷⁶ Daly, *Outercourse*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Daly, *Quintessence*, p. 134.

reduces them to a generality. Constructing a straw woman (or straw person gendered as feminine) of the supposedly post-modern feminist scene, she fails to meet the academic obligation to specify one's opponent and give fair weight to their views. Clearly Daly is not at this stage interested in academic obligations, but such a strictly oppositional stance again reproduces her exteriority to the field, and paradoxically works *with* dominant, negative constructions of her, rather than against them.

Field and habitus, then, are in a continual, symbiotic relation. In Daly's case, I have argued, they often come to work *together* to exclude Daly's intellectual productions, and Daly herself, from the field of women's studies proper. The point is not that habitus and field always complement one another, nor that Daly inevitably comes to be excluded due to the irreconcilability of the two; rather, given Daly's general difficulties with intellectual fields when she becomes a producer in them, and habitus which is *relatively* ill-prepared for certain requirements of such fields (for classed and other reasons), we can understand that Daly's options were more limited than other sorts of intellectual producer.

CONCLUSION

Daly's attempts to ridicule the 'postmodern' centre of the women's studies field in *Quintessence* are representative of one part of the crux of this analysis. As she moves through the theological and women's studies fields, her relations to the centre of those fields morph; and we can see such developments through changes in her written style. By *Quintessence*, Daly's penultimate book, she has developed a relation to women's studies as an academic discipline which is heavily ironic and *external*: she speaks as one who is not in

any straightforward way an actor in that field, but rather a commentator from the 'real world' of feminism proper, exterior to the games and concerns of academic women's studies. We saw that Daly comes to take a similar position in relation to the theological field: she becomes external to its restrictions but also to the disciplinary stability it had given her, so that her writing becomes more playful as it begins to disappear from theological histories.

The problem which an analysis of Daly's trajectory helps us to untangle is that of the relations between feminist politics and academic disciplines, both traditional and new. If Daly comes to position herself and be positioned outside of or at least peripheral to such disciplines, this is the result of a complex biography rather than some consistent and deeply felt opposition to them. Like all academic feminists, Daly should not be considered a free-floating sister intellectual impervious to institutional constraints, any more than a self-interested collaborator in academic privilege. As we see by moving through her works chronologically, she develops something like consciousness of the constraints placed on her by intellectual fields gradually, and for a while at least maintains a highly ambivalent relation to the disciplinary fields in which she participates at the margins.

It is in the mid-1970s, I have argued, that Daly most clearly inhabits this liminal space, on the periphery of theology and the emergent discipline of women's studies. Beginning to develop critiques of institutional structures she nonetheless remains indebted to and immersed within, it is at this stage, I have argued, that her work most clearly conveys a consistent aspiration to meet the requirements of academic fields *from* her position of comparative marginality. Rather than a straightforward imitation of the central position, then, here we find the ambiguity of a marginal speaking position which *reaches forward* into the centre and thus, problematically and with great difficulty, inhabits both. And it is this reaching forward which gives *Beyond*

God the Father its scope and its potential in fact to change academic fields. Toril Moi makes precisely this point in relation to Simone de Beauvoir, and her rendering of the ambiguity conveys extremely well the difficulties as well as uses of maintaining such a position:

Beauvoir is not producing her text from a position of conscious marginality: the tensions in her discourse can only be explained if, in some curious sense, one sees her as *investigating her own marginality from a position of centrality*. This is indeed the logical outcome of Beauvoir's speaking position, with its uneasy mixture of an assured belief in her own legitimacy juxtaposed with an intermittent awareness of her own secondary status in a patriarchal field. Her most powerful work [...] is produced not from the repression of this contradiction, but from the painful conflict arising between these two opposing moments of identification.⁷⁹

Maintaining this difficult moment of conflictual consciousness, rather than seeking to resolve it by flight from either scholarliness *or* the marginality of one's position is, I will argue in Chapter Four, central to the political and intellectual potential of the women's studies project. As a disciplinary field which, I will argue, emerges from the very intellectual ambivalence to which Moi points, women's studies at its best allows for, rather than seeking to police, its more problematic elements. To note the importance of maintaining this ambivalent position, however, is a very different thing from condemning those whose specific situation makes staying there more difficult than it might be for others; just as we would do well to seek to understand the reasons that women's studies polices its borders in ways which often do not appear substantially different from the strategies used by more traditional disciplines. Problems in both academic fields in which I have documented Daly's

⁷⁹ Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir*, p. 89 (original emphasis).

movements, in particular the disciplinary casting out she suffered, could not be recuperated or converted in the way that similar experiences for Judith Butler could be. In the next chapter, we will see precisely what the similarities and differences are between Daly's and Butler's experiences with both traditional disciplines and women's studies. In particular, we will see how Butler has been able to convert her rejection from academic fields into a general intellectual capital, and how, again, it is the interplay between field and habitus which can explain that strategy.

Ch. 3

Judith the Obscure

Authenticity, Intellectual Capital, and the Indiscipline of Judith Butler

Philosophy is the predominant disciplinary mechanism that currently mobilizes this author-subject, although it rarely if ever appears separated from other discourses. This enquiry seeks to affirm those positions on the critical boundaries of disciplinary life. The point is not to stay marginal, but to participate in whatever network or marginal zones is [sic.] spawned from other disciplinary centers and that, together, constitute a multiple displacement of those authorities.

Judith Butler¹

If Mary Daly can be characterised as a marginalised academic figure, no less in women's studies than theology, Judith Butler is perhaps less easy to place in the collective intellectual consciousness. One of the most well-known names in the humanities, often regarded as the instigator of a whole new direction in feminist theory, if not as the inventor of gender studies, and as the author of crucially important ideas in political theory and some strands of philosophy, she remains an ambiguous figure for many.

At the same time as she is regularly invited to give keynote addresses as well as to write in the mainstream press, for at least the last fifteen years she has been the recipient of often quite forceful and derisive criticism. She has been censured for her affinities with particular strands of continental philosophy (especially, amongst feminist critics, her intellectual kinship with male post-structuralists); for her penchant for abstract theory which allegedly distances her work from practical issues and political activism; for her purported de-politicisation of feminism (and other sorts of activism) through

¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. xxxii.

a continuing destabilisation of political categories, notably the sex/gender distinction and male/female binary; and for what is taken to be her obscure, elitist prose. Indeed, on many of these counts (particularly, but not only, amongst feminists), Butler may be seen as paradigmatic of these trends in the humanities.² If Butler does indeed hold a paradigmatic place in some common constructions of the state of contemporary feminism, 'theory', and the humanities more generally, then how does she *come to represent* the juncture of a series of theoretical and historical shifts which are, presumably, considerably more widespread than her own intellectual output? How do disciplines, understood as fields, come to frame Butler as both paradigmatic and pathological? Why should Butler take this role, and how does she come to deal with such framings? In short, how do habitus and field work to condition Butler's intellectual output and its reception?

With these questions in mind, this chapter takes a broad look at Butler's intellectual output, alongside the responses of others to individual works, and some more comprehensive overviews of her writing. There is a particular focus on Butler's written style and responses to it, and this is not only because the allegation of obscurantism is one of the most consistent charges she faces. It is also because, by looking at *apparently* peripheral features of her work and responses to it, we get to particularly pernicious forms of critique: critiques which manage to carry out fierce assessments of Butler precisely *because* they are 'only' about language. Such critiques often rest on an assumption that writers have full control of the language available to them and which they feel they can use, and that obscurity therefore reveals a character failing. Against such a reading, in this chapter I will try to

² Heather Love puts it like this: 'Over the years, she has come to serve as a lightning rod for a whole range of feelings about the academy, critical theory, gender politics, and any number of other issues.' 'Dwelling in Ambivalence', *Women's Review of Books*, 22.2 (2004), 18-19 (p. 19); Clare Hemmings argues that Butler has 'the heaviest teleological burden' for the move toward 'gender' and away from 'women' in constructions of the history of feminist theory. 'Telling Feminist Stories', *Feminist Theory*, 6.2 (2005), 115-39 (p. 125).

understand how different disciplinary fields (those of philosophy, political theory, literary theory, and women's studies) exert different sorts of effects on Butler and her writing at different stages in her career; and that therefore, if Butler writes in ways which certain readers find obtuse or pompous, this is not a *moral* reflection on Butler (or, indeed, on those readers). In her defence of Butler against Martha Nussbaum's various critiques, Margaret Ferguson makes the point strikingly:

It may of course be the case that the author is or was a liar or a criminal; but the difficulty of his or her style is, I contend, much less likely to reflect a given author's moral qualities than to refract a complex set of interactions between the features of a text [...] on the one hand, and on the other, variously educated and socially positioned readers.³

But I would add to this the crucial element of writers themselves, who no less than readers are variously educated and socially positioned. Both the specific intellectual contexts into which ideas are introduced, and the sets of dispositions both producing and receiving those ideas, are crucial to bear in mind if we wish to come to a fuller understanding of what is going on when Butler is received in these kinds of ways: that is, it is the broadly Bourdieusian concepts of *habitus* and *field* which help us understand what is happening in such instances.

In her preface to the second edition of *Gender Trouble*, published in 1999, Butler makes repeated reference to the reception of that book in terms of its style. Her ambivalence about why she has developed a certain writing style is particularly interesting, fluctuating as it does between a defence of philosophically challenging language as necessary, at least on occasion, to stage a break with common-sensical understandings of the world; and an

³ Margaret Ferguson, 'Difficult Style and "Illustrious" Vernaculars', in *Just Being Difficult? Academic Writing in the Public Arena*, ed. by Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 15-28 (p. 16).

assertion that it is a fallacy to suggest that writers have an overarching control over the language available to them. She writes that, 'I think that style is a complicated terrain, and not one that we unilaterally choose or control with the purposes we consciously intend.' On precisely the same page, however, she appears to make a distinction between complex language of better and worse moral types: the public took to her work in surprising ways, despite its style, because 'the complication is not gratuitous'.⁴ Here Butler becomes responsible for her choice of words and so, by inference, do those whose obscurity is in fact gratuitous. Further, by labelling the desire for simple language an 'insistence on *parochial* standards of transparency', Butler seems to come closer to the argument, from which she had previously distanced herself, that better or worse style (and its more or less happy reception in a particular reader) suggests something about the *character* of readers and writers.⁵ This conception of good (necessary, modest, consciously enacted) complexity versus bad (unnecessary, gratuitous, not *necessarily* consciously enacted) complexity leads us to believe that we can unambiguously distinguish between *properly philosophical* obscurity and that which is either indicative of linguistic and positional insecurity, or otherwise mere humbuggery. Given that Butler has had to defend herself from attacks which particularly accuse her of the latter, we certainly might understand why she would wish to bolster the distinction. Nonetheless, it is my contention that instances of these types of language cannot always be neatly explicated, and indeed that in many cases we find elements of all three at once; and further, that language choice is always intricately tied up with the restrictions of disciplinary fields, and the options open to *habitus* to negotiate such conditions.

⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xviii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xix (my emphasis). Butler intimates a similar understanding in her contribution to *Just Being Difficult?*, a collective response to the *Philosophy and Literature* Bad Writing Prize: 'The demand that language deliver what is already understandable appears to be a demand to be left alone with what one already knows.' See her 'Values of Difficulty', in *Just Being Difficult?*, ed. by Culler and Lamb, pp. 199-215 (p. 203).

BUTLER AND HABITUS

In contrast to Daly, not only has Butler (as we might expect) *not* written a very lengthy and involved autobiography; there is also remarkably little available information on her personal background in works written *about* her. Whilst Butler does mention a number of facts and memories from her formative years – and she writes about a number of them in disparate places – it is difficult to get a comprehensive sense of her background. What we know is that, unlike Daly's, both of Butler's parents had some university education (indeed, her mother attended the prestigious liberal arts college Vassar); and that her father was a dentist. Unlike Daly, Butler pursued philosophy institutionally from high school onward (recall Daly's Catholic education and the repeated obstacles placed in the way of her pursuing both philosophy and the highest levels of theology), attending an introductory course at a local university, before going on to study the subject at first Bennington, a liberal arts college, and then Yale. Butler also recounts that books found in her family home's basement, including works by Spinoza, Kierkegaard, and Schopenhauer, had given her a first taste for philosophy.⁶ From these fragmented facts, we can conclude that Butler's family background was an educated and, broadly speaking, a middle-class one.

Although this general class background is important, however, it is only in the context of field that its implications make themselves felt. This is because it is field which performs, as Bourdieu puts it, the 'crucial mediation' between social actors and the entire social cosmos: it is field which arbitrates social positioning and, in turn, the series of options which an agent has available to them. Intellectual products are never, on this reading, simply the expression of a particular social background: they develop, rather, through the dynamic play of positions which make up an individual's varied excursions

⁶ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 235-40.

through social space.⁷ Butler has a class, a gender, a sexuality (and so on) which may make her statistically more or less likely to develop certain lines of thought or to be received as a success in particular pursuits; but it is only through the mediation of (multiple, intersecting) fields that we come to know her positions in their specificity. This is not to say that habitus does not have a crucial part to play, but rather that it cannot be accessed in a sufficiently nuanced way without the specificity of field context.

In this chapter, I try to understand both the intellectual trajectory and reception of Butler through the Bourdieusian idea, outlined in previous chapters, that academic disciplines constitute discrete fields of endeavour with nonetheless overlapping principles of valuation, and that it is the symbiotic interplay of habitus and disciplinary field which creates both possibilities and constraints for Butler's writing. The contention is that in different ways according to the disciplinary rules of different fields, Butler comes to be understood as a relative outsider, who has somehow come to prominence *by looking like she is doing political theory/literary studies/women's studies, without in fact quite doing them*. What is policed in this distinction is both the separation of 'real' scholarship from its imitation, and the boundaries securing academic disciplines from what should remain external: to insist that some scholarship is not what it claims to be (effectively to exclude it from the field) is a particularly stark and forceful form of 'field work'. Often, such critiques implicitly link Butler's 'appearance' of scholarship to a perceived over-confidence and dilettantism – on my reading here, connected to an intellectual habitus conditioned in a prestigious educational context, and thereby broadly at ease with different disciplinary arenas. This regulation of disciplinary boundaries might have markedly different explanations in different contexts:

⁷ See Pierre Bourdieu with Loïc J D Wacquant, 'For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals: On *Homo Academicus*', trans. by Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 34 (1989), 1-29 (p. 20).

as we will see, it can take a largely conservative form, seeking to bolster extant academic hierarchies, but in other contexts might suggest a desire to protect quite vulnerable institutional spaces. I concentrate on these critiques of Butler not because they are the only sort of response to her work in these disciplines – indeed, she has been praised for the interdisciplinary nature of her writings – but rather because they may illuminate broader issues in the construction of academic systems and, especially, in the distinction between capital which has currency in specific academic fields, and something like a broader *intellectual* capital.

In contrast to Daly, Butler is able to move between fields and, despite negative receptions, to remain an assured and fundamentally successful academic: whilst in the previous chapter I looked at two disciplines in which Daly staged interventions, here I will trace Butler's trajectory through four. Field and habitus work to produce Butler as outside of the delimited boundaries of different disciplines for different reasons, but it is a habitus conditioned in an exceptionally prestigious higher educational context which allows her to convert these diverse exclusions into *general* intellectual capital. There is a crucial difference in the importance of habitus in Butler's and Daly's cases, in as much as Butler does not experience the kind of rupture between objective and subjective structures early in her career that, as we saw, had such a profound effect on Daly. By contrast, there is a notable *fit* between Butler's habitus and her actual, early experiences of intellectual fields, in which she was relatively successful. It is clear that the kind of disjuncture experienced by less privileged individuals in new fields offers real insights and opportunities, as well as potentially less positive consequences, for those individuals: Daly's difficulties with theology allowed her to develop radical analyses of problems that an assimilated intellectual may never have perceived. And yet the increasing difficulties of her institutional position fed

into the problems of her later work which, as we saw, led many feminists to abandon her ideas altogether. Both Daly and Butler are able to (and do) *negotiate* their situations but, broadly speaking, Butler's *sense for the intellectual game* helps her to negotiate similarly difficult terrain with far greater success. It is these differences, shaped by habitus within the specific context of fields, which need to be traced.

BUTLER'S EARLY RELATION TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL FIELD

As she tells the story in the illuminating 'Can the "Other" of Philosophy Speak?', Butler was deeply interested in philosophy from her early teenage years. Required to take extra classes in ethics as punishment for disruptive behaviour by her rabbi, and discovering philosophy books in her parents' basement, she came to the subject in what she describes as a 'deinstitutionalized' and 'autodidactic' way.⁸ Nonetheless, she seems to have *developed* her relation to the subject in a way which is in fact rather conventional: after attending classes in analytic philosophy at a local university whilst still in high school, she went on to study the discipline as an undergraduate at both Bennington and Yale. Whilst she maintained an affiliation with continental philosophy there (going on to study under Hans Georg Gadamer in Germany on a scholarship), she discusses her aversion at this stage to Nietzsche, and to Paul de Man's lectures at Yale:

de Man was destroying the very presumption of philosophy, unraveling concepts unto metaphors, and stripping philosophy of its powers of consolation. [...] At that time, I arrogantly decided that those who attended his seminars were not really philosophers. [...] I resolved that they did not know

⁸ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, pp. 234; 235.

the materials, that they were not asking the serious questions, and I returned to the more conservative wing of continental philosophy about 30 yards away, in Connecticut Hall, acting for the moment as if the distance that divided comparative literature from philosophy was much greater than it could possibly be.⁹

Retrospectively, Butler comprehends her attempts to bolster the distinction between philosophy and other disciplines in the humanities as understandable but finally misguided. This insight into her youthful naivety seems to suggest something else: that she has *come to* a wiser and more mature position on the connections between the disciplines. Indeed, this is precisely what the entire article, 'Can the "Other" of Philosophy Speak?', is about: Butler's increasing sense that the work she wants to produce (and, perhaps, the best sort of intellectual work in general) does not exist within the tightly-defined bounds of institutionalised philosophy, but rather in the interdisciplinary spaces between academic traditions. Yet at the moment when she published *Subjects of Desire*, her doctoral dissertation (in 1987), she maintained a very clear affiliation with the subject of philosophy, as the intellectual tradition with which she conversed as well as the institutional home in which she found herself: at this point, she had a post-doctoral fellowship at Wesleyan University.

Subjects of Desire seeks to explore the reception of Hegel in twentieth-century France: firstly, by inter-war philosophers including Jean Hyppolite, Alexandre Kojève, and Jean-Paul Sartre, and secondly (in a comparatively brief section), by post-war post-structuralists such as Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault. Indeed, the final post-structuralist section was not (Butler tells us in the preface to the second edition) an original part of the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

PhD thesis, but was rather added to the manuscript for publication.¹⁰ In 1987, we are told, Butler was not as well versed in these latter theorists as she would subsequently have liked, and in fact was only beginning to come to terms with how post-structuralism might inform her own Hegelian appropriations; and so the section seems to her to be somewhat tacked on to the book. As in her recounting of her thoughts on Paul de Man, then, Butler at this time seems attached to institutionalised ideas about what properly philosophical work should be like, even whilst beginning to engage with theorists who have often not been considered part of the truly philosophical tradition, understood from her position in institutionalised Anglophone philosophy.

In a comparative review of *Subjects of Desire* along with Michael Roth's *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (which was published in the next year and which Butler herself reviewed in 1990),¹¹ philosophical historian Allan Megill draws a distinction between the two books largely on the grounds of a sharp discrepancy between their intellectual disciplines (philosophy and history respectively). He particularly notes Butler's commitment to a strictly philosophical reading of the texts which, while allowing her to produce a well-delineated and therefore self-assured account ('there is a sure-footedness of judgment here that historians ought to envy'), nonetheless causes her to ignore extra-philosophical elements such as political and social history. Megill's point is that philosophy, unmitigated by any historical consciousness or excursions into social application, fails to interrogate its object as fully as it might.¹² Steve

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, 2nd edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. viii. Butler here seems to intimate that there were at least implicit commercial imperatives affecting the translation of the thesis into book form.

¹¹ See Judith Butler, 'Review of *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* by Michael S. Roth', *History and Theory*, 29.2 (1990), 248-58.

¹² Allan Megill, 'Review of *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* by Judith P. Butler and *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* by Michael S. Roth', *Journal of Modern History*, 63.1 (1991), 124-28 (pp. 124; 127).

Fuller has argued that such a self-understanding of the discipline as fully abstract (which Butler appears to be embracing to some extent at this stage in her career) is one of the defining features of twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy: over the last hundred years, it has become increasingly difficult for those who would be recognised as philosophers to give their ideas social or political applications, or to make normative judgements. Those philosophers who did, ‘came to be seen as [...] eccentric and even troublesome.’¹³ And yet Butler is not unambiguous on this point: whilst she does maintain a largely exegetical style which refuses to judge theoretical ideas according to the nefarious political work they might do *in practice* (‘There are a number of reasons to reject Lacan’s psychoanalytic account of desire, of sexual difference, his assumptions regarding the cross-cultural prevalence and function of the incest taboo, but such a discussion would take us into a wholly different inquiry’),¹⁴ she nonetheless begins to develop, toward the end of the book, a more recognisably Butlerian interrogation into precisely who is included and who *excluded* in particular ontological formulations.¹⁵

At this very early stage in her career, then, Butler is entering a tightly-circumscribed field of endeavour which, as she seems to imply in her 1999 preface to the second edition of *Subjects of Desire*, delimits the type of work she feels able to produce. She writes that she had published the book ‘too early’, overly concerned, as an early-career academic, with the requisites of finding a permanent job in philosophy.¹⁶ Irrespective of those moments when Butler’s ‘extra-philosophical’ concerns begin to break out, what we find in *Subjects of Desire*, as Megill points out, is close textual analysis *largely* unconcerned with the social and political implications of the philosophical

¹³ Steve Fuller, *The Sociology of Intellectual Life: The Career of the Mind in and around the Academy* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 63.

¹⁴ Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, p. 204.

¹⁵ ‘Foucault may well give us an account of how the “subject” is generated, but he cannot tell us which subjects are generated in the way that he describes, and at whose expense.’ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

ideas she reads. As Butler herself acknowledges, the disciplinary field circumscribes her options at this early stage in her career. Just as Daly understood her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, within the terms of academic theology and as a contribution to that specific field of endeavour, so Butler's early self-understanding is caught up with the specificity of her own intellectual tradition. As educationally successful but professionally inexperienced young academics, both Butler and Daly negotiate their fields from positions of relative marginality, and this has clear implications for the types of work they produce. But whilst the response of the theological field to Daly's work is profoundly negative, and we can trace the repercussions of that rejection through her later work, Butler at this stage continues to experience notable success: she goes on to take a number of philosophy fellowships at prestigious universities, including Wesleyan and Johns Hopkins, and is given a professorship in her mid-thirties.¹⁷ Daly, we recall, retired in her seventies never having attained a chair.

It is in the context of her elite philosophical education and relatively smooth entry into the higher levels of academia that we should understand the production of *Gender Trouble*, Butler's second book. Entering the women's studies field, not as an original disciplinary home, but rather as a new discipline with which she could converse from a now relatively secure position within philosophy, she develops a line of argument often noted both for its very assured writing style, and for its apparent externality to the discipline of women's studies. These aspects of the book's writing and reception can be understood by taking *habitus* and *field* as important elements in possibilities for intellectual production.

¹⁷ See Judith Butler with Regina Michalik, 'The Desire for Philosophy: Interview with Judith Butler', *Lola*, 2 (2001) <http://www.lolapress.org/elec2/artenglish/butl_e.htm> [accessed 20 June 2012] (para. 29 of 35).

WOMEN'S STUDIES AND ITS OUTSIDE

In her preface to the 1999 re-issue of *Gender Trouble*, Butler offers some insights into the various biographical details which influenced her decision to write the book. Characterising such personal factors as her 'life outside those walls [of the academy]', she talks about her experiences with various forms of political activism in the fourteen years prior to the publication of the book, and about a number of experiences as she was growing up which made issues around sexual and gender regulation particularly pertinent to her.¹⁸ These recountings are significant because they help us think about how feminists in general and Butler in particular come to be attached to feminist causes; yet by focusing on these personal explanations for the book's theme, we might miss what seem to be equally important *academic* questions about the reasons for its production. In particular, what effect does Butler's philosophical training (and disciplinary security) have on the type of intervention she can make in women's studies, and how does the constitution of the disciplinary field itself condition that intervention's reception?

Against, perhaps, a relatively common reading of Butler as the instigator of a new direction in women's studies, here I will try to place her feminist engagements in the context of broader currents in the discipline. As Clare Hemmings has shown through the critical strategy of 'recitation' (the conscious adoption of specific citation practices), it is possible to challenge the pervasiveness of dominant stories about Butler. In Hemmings's example, the common idea that Butler is theoretically informed by and in the thrall of male philosophers can be challenged in part by adopting a new emphasis in citation practice which stresses the debt Butler in fact owes to female (and feminist) precursors. Rather than continually stressing the importance of Michel Foucault to Butler's work, for instance, it is quite possible to focus on Monique

¹⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. xvii; xvi; xix-xx.

Wittig's (explicitly cited) influence. Such a strategy 'does not represent the resolution of a competition for primacy between Foucault and Wittig in claiming Butler's attentions, but a laying bare of what is at stake in the critical certainty that Butler's primary affiliate is (always) Foucault'.¹⁹ In a similar vein, in this section I will try to tell a new story about Butler's coming to write a feminist monograph, in a way which emphasises academic women's studies as a field, constituted by numerous axes of power as well as by a relation to feminism outside the academy and to other academic disciplines. It is in the context of academic fields (rather than as an individual innovator coming from outside of women's studies) that Butler's writings on gender will be thought through.

In her historiographical work, Hemmings shows how *Gender Trouble* comes to stand for a watershed in the progression of feminist theory: published in 1990, the book represents, whether positively or negatively, the end of an intersectional, identitarian feminist politics, with a concentration on race and sexuality (also known as the 1980s, which itself staged a break with the radical, separatist second wave of the 1970s – exemplified, as we have seen, by Daly), toward a deconstructive, gender-based approach which refuses notions of identity.²⁰ This story, whether coded as progress or decline, utilises *Gender Trouble* specifically to stage the break with an identity-based past and the move toward a non-foundational future. Indeed, the suggestion of the Butlerian break sometimes takes quite surprisingly general forms: in an interview with Butler in 2004, Gary Olsen and Lynn Worsham make the statement, 'you write that "...we ought to ask what political possibilities are the consequences of a radical critique of the categories of gender?" This

¹⁹ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 189.

²⁰ 'You may know without me telling you that "the past" most often refers to the 1970s, that reference to identity and difference denotes the 1980s, and that the 1990s stands as the decade of difference proper, as that which must be returned from in the noughts.' *Ibid.*, p. 5.

critique is one that you yourself initiated with the publication of *Gender Trouble*.²¹

And yet if we look back to what was happening in women's studies at around the time of *Gender Trouble*, as Butler herself points out in response to the interviewers' question above, it is quite possible to develop a story which understands her work as fully immersed in an already vibrant feminist conversation around issues of identity and foundations, as well as feminist engagement with continental post-structuralism. In 1985, both Alice Jardine and Toril Moi produced book-length interrogations and appropriations of contemporary French theory from feminist perspectives; and as far back into the ether as 1981, bell hooks was insisting that 'women' as a marker inevitably failed to capture the complexity of gendered experience. Two years before *Gender Trouble*, Denise Riley's '*Am I that Name?*' continued the questioning of 'women' as a viable category, and Butler herself contributed an article to 1990's *Feminism/Postmodernism*, an edited collection published before *Gender Trouble*, which sought to bring together recent writings on the possibility of non-foundational feminism, the earliest from 1984.²² The point of this list is not to show that *Gender Trouble* was not innovative and original, but rather that the kinds of questions Butler was able to ask and the theories she offered to think them through would not have been available to her were it not for the particular constitution of women's studies as an academic field at that time.

²¹ Judith Butler with Gary A. Olsen and Lynn Worsham, 'Changing the Subject: Judith Butler's Politics of Radical Resignification', in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. by Sara Salih with Judith Butler (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 325-56 (p. 335).

²² Alice A. Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985); Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End, 1981); Denise Riley, '*Am I That Name?*' *Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Judith Butler, 'Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse', in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. by Linda J. Nicholson (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 324-40.

Indeed, and quite cogently, the idea that Butler in general and *Gender Trouble* in particular mark a fundamental change in the direction of academic feminism is relatively new. In the five or so years following the publication of *Gender Trouble*, a great number of feminist books emerged that dealt, positively or negatively, with ‘post-modern’ engagements amongst feminists in the cultural sphere as well as post-structuralism as a theoretical affiliation. In most of these books, especially those which take a particularly dim view of this ‘turn’, Butler is merely one feminist amongst others doing the work; and in a number of them, she barely figures at all. In Somer Brodribb’s *Nothing Mat(t)ers*, from 1992, Butler is mentioned just once, in the context of a footnote on Luce Irigaray; as late as 1997, Jean Curthoys’s *Feminist Amnesia*, largely a critique of (then) contemporary feminism’s deconstruction of binary categories, surely the theoretical move for which *Gender Trouble* is most famous, does not mention Butler at all.²³ *Gender Trouble*’s current positioning as the seminal post-structuralist feminist work does not seem to be, then, a continuation of its original reception.

In that case, we should ask ourselves whether any book of the last five years has been received as an instant revolution or game-changer, in women’s studies or any other academic discipline with which we are familiar. The answer is probably no. And yet there are works from the less recent past, including *Gender Trouble*, which are often seen *retrospectively* as turning points for academic traditions. In the women’s studies context, we might also think of *The Second Sex*, which seems to take on the appearance of a sort of pre-feminist miracle, *The Feminine Mystique* as the birth of liberal feminism, or the Combahee River Collective statement as the moment when a feminism

²³ See Somer Brodribb, *Nothing Mat(t)ers: A Feminist Critique of Postmodernism*, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1993), p. 100 n. 13; Jean Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women’s Liberation* (London: Routledge, 1997).

specific to women of colour emerged.²⁴ Whilst it seems right to talk about the innovation and importance of these works, it is only in the context of fields of collective intellectual endeavour and through the communal practice of history-making that they become legible as stand-out moments or game-changers. When we think about what is happening in an academic discipline like women's studies through the lens of *field*, as Bourdieu conceptualises it – that is, when we take these *communal* practices to be fundamentally important for both intellectual production and reception – we can begin to posit an explanation for *Gender Trouble's* (and Butler's) more recent reception amongst academic feminists.

The crucial distinction which, on a Bourdieusian reading, makes it possible to talk about what Butler *represents* rather than what she in fact does in the field, is that between a position and a position-taking. In 'The Field of Cultural Production', Bourdieu argues for an understanding of the literary and artistic field which neither reduces that field to the economic (in the strict sense) conditions of production – populism on the one side and bourgeois art on the other – nor grants it autonomy from broader socio-economic structures. The set of *positions* in a given field is 'objective' in the Bourdieusian sense: there are positions of greater and lesser legitimacy according to different axes of valuation, and these are relatively stable over time. In the field of artistic production, for example, there is a position which is low in artistic consecration, garners a minimal audience and little revenue, and is relatively autonomous from considerations of profit and the market: this is something like the young, bohemian avant-garde, and we do not need to

²⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Gollancz, 1963); Combahee River Collective, 'A Black Feminist Statement', in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Watertown, MA: Persephone, 1981), pp. 210-18. As in the previous chapter, we might also think of Audre Lorde's 'Open Letter to Mary Daly' (1979) as a watershed in the 'emergence' of black feminism. Re-printed in Lorde's *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: Crossing, 2007), pp. 66-71.

know which *particular* works or artistic styles take the position at any one time to get a sense of the position itself. These individual works or styles which express a particular position are for Bourdieu position-*takings*. Although they express an implicit defence of their corresponding positions, these position-takings also have their own system of relations, and change in meaning and significance as new position-takings enter the field. A particular position-taking can *come to represent* a historical period or theoretical movement, irrespective of its own primacy or singularity at the time.²⁵ By thinking about *Gender Trouble* as a position-taking which changes over time rather than a static expression of position, we may get to an understanding of its reception which takes into account the importance of the book without insisting that, in and of itself, it staged a radical break with feminism as it had previously existed.

Gender Trouble, as a position-taking, accrues a theoretical significance *over time*; and this significance can have different meanings within different factions of the women's studies field. As Butler sees it, *Gender Trouble* was written at the juncture between feminism as political activism (Butler's witnessing and personal experiences of the exclusion the mainstream women's movement enacts when it insists on 'women' as foundation), and women's studies as academic interrogation (her search for the philosophical and linguistic underpinnings of those exclusions); and yet it comes to be seen as the specific historical and textual site for the radical *disjuncture* of those two endeavours. For some, the historical move represented by Butler is coded as increased theoretical complexity, allied to a broadening of feminism's earlier, narrower politics, and to the increasing maturity and sophistication of the women's studies project. For others, she is rather conceived of as representative of an end to academic feminism's usability for the practical

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), pp. 29-73.

goals of feminist activism. In both cases, however, it is Butler who takes what Hemmings calls the ‘teleological burden’ for the move.²⁶

In a sense, for our purposes it does not matter whether *Gender Trouble* ‘really’ divorces theory from activism or rather marries them in a more complex way (and it is difficult to see how a conclusive answer could be reached on such a question): whatever its immediate implications, the book has *come to represent* a broader shift in the history of women’s studies. As when *Subjects of Desire*’s publishers proclaim (on the back cover of the second edition) the book to be ‘now classic’, despite it probably remaining a somewhat obscure monograph on Hegel, what is being pointed toward in women’s studies’ positionings of Butler is her place as a privileged conduit of the history of theory. Since Butler has subsequently become (but was not at the time) a hugely important intellectual figure, her name has come to represent a series of intellectual shifts which we might just as easily understand as crucially formative of her work. And since, as we will see, Butler’s accumulated academic capital allows her to move beyond any narrow disciplinary circumscription, and increasingly to address herself to ‘broader’ political discussions than those purportedly contained within women’s studies, *Gender Trouble* can itself be positioned as outside of that discipline. By either embracing feminism’s intellectual history as progress or dismissing it as decline, and in either case allowing a representative individual such as Butler (or Daly) to take the burden, women’s studies practitioners contest and police the legitimate borders for their academic pursuit. In this sense, women’s studies is not radically different from other academic disciplines, understood as fields undertaking police work for their own institutional security. Through a reading of two feminist responses to Butler’s work (the radical feminist challenge to post-structuralism outlined in the collection *Radically Speaking*,

²⁶ Hemmings, ‘Telling Feminist Stories’, p. 125.

and the feminist political philosopher Martha Nussbaum's critique 'The Professor of Parody'), we can see such a positioning of Butler take place; and, in Nussbaum's case, see how the position is in some sense reproduced in the field of political philosophy.

KILLING JOY

One of the most consistently invoked and difficult to refute characterisations of feminists is surely that of the joyless, sour-faced schoolmarm, unable to take a harmless joke without harping on about gender regulation and speculums. In *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed argues persuasively that the denigration of 'misery' often hangs off groups ('feminist killjoys', 'unhappy queers', 'melancholic migrants', and 'angry black women') who either refuse or are not able to 'find' happiness through culturally acceptable avenues, including life-long monogamous marriage, reconciliation to capitalism, and full assimilation into accepted national culture. The 'unhappiness' of these groups stems, on Ahmed's reading, from a quite intelligible resistance to acceptance of the status quo, and acknowledgement that such norms are not in fact as easy to adhere to for some groups as for others; yet such unhappiness comes to be culturally reinscribed as an almost pathological failure to reconcile oneself to what 'makes' others happy, and indeed as a selfish refusal to secure the happiness of others by ignoring what might likewise create unhappiness in them.²⁷

There are many strategies feminists might use to counter the invocation of the feminist killjoy, including a re-reading of the meaning of joy and its demise such as Ahmed's. One relatively common response amongst feminists is to use humour creatively – not, one hopes, to prove that feminists

²⁷ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 50-87.

do *really* have a sense of humour, but rather to develop community around a shared sense of the absurdity of anti-feminist culture, and even to create a sense of happiness which does not rely upon acceptance of existing social structures. This idea of, especially radical, feminists creating community by laughing together is a comparatively long-standing one: Mary Daly writes that

There is no ‘appropriate response’ to sadoseriousness. The point is not to respond/react, but spontaneously to Act – inappropriately. Seeing the absurdity, a responsible/response-able woman Laughs Out Loud.²⁸

What is notable when it comes to some feminist responses to Butler, and to the post-structuralist turn in women’s studies more generally, is that feminists begin laughing at each other. In particular, there is a specifically feminist construction of the feminist killjoy: *some* feminists, it turns out, were humourless after all, and it becomes legitimate in some quarters to deride ‘sadoseriousness’ even when it stems from a feminist. I would argue that this is relatively novel in the women’s studies field, and produces Butler as the site for an unacceptable unhappiness. Although this feminist appropriation of a tactic which has been used rather successfully against feminists as a group may make us feel uneasy, my point is that if we understand radical feminists as broadly marginalised within the women’s studies field and the movement more generally, the tactic is understandable. When groups of academic feminists oppose one another in ways which can seem problematic and even cruel, this should be understood within the context of changing fields and the emotional as well as intellectual and political investments individuals place within them.

In the edited collection *Radically Speaking*, a large and international group of radical feminists discuss what the politics means for them,

²⁸ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex: With the Feminist Postchristian Introduction and New Archaic Afterwords by the Author*, 3rd edn (Boston: Beacon, 1985), p. xxvi.

demonstrate radical feminism in action, and defend it from pernicious and generalising attacks. The articles gathered in the volume are disparate, as we would expect, and offer different interpretations of feminist history and hopes for the future. However, one relatively consistent theme is post-structuralism and post-modernism as largely damaging to the broader feminist project and, especially, the notion that feminists who define themselves or are defined here as post-structuralist are only superficially feminist, and fail to grasp (or, as relatively privileged academics, choose not to grasp) the de-politicisation which comes through the marriage of feminist politics with the post-structuralist turn in the academy. While this critique comes in many forms, often taking considered and discerning issue with particular ideas rather than attempting to produce a wholesale attack on post-structuralist feminism, what concerns me here is occasional humorous *derision* toward some feminist academic practices. This is clear, for instance, in some contributors' jocular titles – Ailbhe Smyth's 'A (Political) Postcard from a Peripheral Pre-Postmodern State (of Mind) or How Alliteration and Parentheses Can Knock You Down Dead in Women's Studies', for example²⁹ – and also in the appendix 'A Po-Mo Quiz', in which the editors collect together multiple-choice questions from contributors 'that might assist the reader in working through the complexities of post-modernism':

Q. How many Po-mos does it take to change a lightbulb?

- (a) None, because the lightbulb, which both typifies the weary technological inventiveness of a dead modernism and also serves as the iconic representation of modern thought ('idea') is utterly meaningless in a post-modern world;

²⁹ Ailbhe Smyth, 'A (Political) Postcard from a Peripheral Pre-Postmodern State (of Mind) or How Alliteration and Parentheses Can Knock You Down Dead in Women's Studies', in *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, ed. by Diane Bell and Renate Klein (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1996), pp. 169-78.

(b) None, they wouldn't bother because it's essentialist and ahistorical to think that you can't see in the dark;

(c) None, the Enlightenment is dead! [...]

Q. If the author is dead who gets the royalty cheque?

(a) The tax man;

(b) ducks;

(c) cheques are texts, stupid.³⁰

Clearly, these jokes out of context are not necessarily about certain kinds of feminists but rather post-modernism as a general idea. Nonetheless, it is feminist uses of post-structuralism which are being criticised in the book more generally, and so we could understand the butt of the jokes to be feminists themselves. This seems important since, while feminists have always disagreed amongst themselves on any number of issues, actual ridicule of other feminists through irony and other rhetorical devices seems somewhat different. In the mid-1990s, academic feminists who identified as radical and opposed to the post-structuralist turn in women's studies no doubt felt marginalised, especially through the notion of feminist timeliness and the idea that some types of feminism were no longer 'in date', so the strategy should be seen as defensive.³¹ Nonetheless, it should also be seen as another example of an attempt to bolster *what is taken to be* a previously agreed-upon definition of academic feminism. If, as Hemmings and others have argued, Butler comes to fill the role of exemplary post-structuralist feminist in our construction of the history of feminist theory (and she is explicitly criticised many times in *Radically Speaking*), then here she comes to be understood as an outsider to the supposedly agreed-upon perimeters of debate in the field. Humour and the construction of Butler as a different sort of feminist killjoy – a 'feminist' that

³⁰ Bell and Klein, *Radically Speaking*, pp. 558; 560.

³¹ See Chapter Four for a detailed consideration of the specific institutional vulnerabilities of women's studies, and the implications for the kind of police work the field undertakes.

kills (radical) feminist joy – serves here to create a sense of academic community which excludes certain forms of feminist theory as not feminist, or at least not feminist enough.

However, within women's studies it is not only those who take a fundamentally opposed view to post-structuralism who discuss Butler in terms of unhappiness, negativity, and even lack of joy. Heather Love, a post-structuralist queer theorist and literary critic, begins a review of *The Judith Butler Reader*, *Precarious Life*, and *Undoing Gender* by discussing Butler's commitment to non-joyous, even depressing accounts of social and psychic life, and to precursors such as Hegel, Lacan, and Foucault, who are described as 'famously pessimistic'. Love's point is not that Butler should be upbraided for such a negative focus, but nonetheless there is a sense that she is amused by this concentration on what is regulative, relatively immutable, and subjugating. Love's review, in the non-academic *Women's Review of Books*, is presented as something like an easing-in to Butler's rather depressing works: a warning to the uninitiated, perhaps, that they will find much to be interested in in Butler, but not to expect a "feelgood" message'.³² The feminist continental philosopher Rosi Braidotti, however, criticises Butler for staying within the philosophy of lack and negation, arguing that such a focus draws energy away from more affirmative and constructive political projects. Butler's response does not disagree with Braidotti's analysis but instead, quite unusually, attributes the cause of this tendency partially in terms of her own biographical history: the comparatively recent memory of the Holocaust in her family during her childhood, and the difficulties she experienced when younger coming to terms with her own sexuality and gender identity in hostile social contexts.³³

³² Love, 'Dwelling in Ambivalence', p. 18.

³³ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 57; Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 195.

The distinction drawn here between Butler's work and the more affirmative kind of community building considered necessary for the feminist project places Butler, like Daly, outside of that community. It is not only those feminists who are intellectually and politically opposed to Butler that draw these kind of distinctions, albeit that those who are from similar field spaces to Butler offer a more measured response. It is a much wider *field effect* than this: Butler is ambivalently but quite consistently placed outside of the conversation of women's studies, and is cast in contradistinction to some idea of field community. Feminist political philosopher Martha Nussbaum's *New Republic* critique of Butler is perhaps the starkest articulation of this distancing between Butler's work and that of real feminists.

BARBAROUS POLITICS

Nussbaum's 1999 polemic, 'The Professor of Parody', is a wide-ranging discussion of such disparate issues in Butler's work as performativity, 'gender' feminism, philosophy as an endeavour, and language use in academic texts. Despite the varied nature of these themes, what consistently emerges in Nussbaum's reading of Butler is a distinction between authenticity and parody. In particular, what we get to in Nussbaum's understanding of Butler's work is an insistence that some feminists really do feminism, and some philosophers really do philosophy, and it is comparatively simple to distinguish between those who really do them and those who do not. There is an emphasis on both 'real women' (meaning, for Nussbaum, not biological women prior to cultural mediation, but rather women as the material effect of social categorisation) as the proper concern of feminist scholarship, and, in crucial conjunction with this, philosophy as distinct from 'the closely related

but adversarial traditions of sophistry and rhetoric'.³⁴ On both of these counts, sometimes explicitly and sometimes less so, Butler is found wanting, and we again witness the disciplining of the disciplines and the policing of field boundaries.

It is worth noting, however, that Nussbaum's sharp distinctions between authentic and inauthentic feminism and philosophy have been challenged. Sara Ahmed has argued that the recent feminist call for 'a return to the body', much like Nussbaum's urging for a return to 'real' women, decides in advance what a concentration on such concerns will in fact look like – since, according to Butler's own understanding and those of many post-structuralists, she is discussing both the body and 'real' women.³⁵ Margaret Ferguson has discussed Nussbaum's clear separation of philosophy from sophistry, drawing attention to the Athenian association of sophistry with barbarity, and both terms with the privileging of the local and a distrust of what is foreign. The distinction between philosophy and sophistry which Nussbaum rather unreflectively reproduces is, on this reading, implicitly reliant on a nationalist, elitist, and xenophobic taxonomy and, whether this aspect of the distinction is consciously invoked by the political philosopher, she at least promotes a quite explicit 'us-and-them' mentality, closing down debate by negating those spaces where there can be fruitful dialogue between those who recognise themselves as 'real' philosophers and those in a more ambivalent relation to the discipline.³⁶ Steve Fuller goes further in insisting that sophists (as a species of the genus 'bullshitters', and in contrast to those who maintain loyalty to disciplines like philosophy traditionally conceived) are

³⁴ Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler', *New Republic*, 220.8 (1999), 37-45 (pp. 39-40). The invocation of rhetoric as an age-old adversary of philosophy may also be a reference to Butler's institutional position as professor of rhetoric and comparative literature.

³⁵ Sara Ahmed, 'Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the "New Materialism"', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 15.1 (2008), 23-39.

³⁶ Ferguson, 'Difficult Style and "Illustrious" Vernaculars', p. 15.

those who push knowledge the furthest by *refusing* to accept wholeheartedly its extant frames of reference:

Bullshit detectors take comfort in the fact that the time required to master a body of knowledge virtually guarantees the initiate's loyalty to its corresponding practices and central dogma. [...]

Both Protestants and sophists are prime candidates for the spread of bullshit because they concede that we may normally address reality in terms it does not recognize – or at least do not require it to yield straight 'yes-or-no', 'true-or-false' answers. In that case, we must make up the difference between the obliqueness of our inquiries and the obtuseness of reality's responses. That 'difference' is fairly seen as bullshit.³⁷

Irrespective of these counters to Nussbaum's authentic-inauthentic binaries, what her critique points us toward is a genuine difficulty found in both the political philosophy and women's studies fields when it comes to dealing with Butler: unlike in continental philosophy or, as we shall see, *some* quarters of literary theory, her overall lack of *normative pronouncements* as well as a definite theory of subjectivity makes her work illegible as 'political' in the sense that it is understood there. Such a lack of 'true' politics, combined with what is taken to be the *veneer* of politics superimposed over an apolitical, literary-minded muddle, creates an impression that Butler is attempting something ('proper' political philosophy, whether feminist or otherwise) which she cannot in fact do without giving up her commitment to asking questions to which she does not have the answer. Nussbaum argues that the reader of Butler might find in her words a form of liberatory or hopeful politics, but this is only because she *fills in* the political norms (justice, dignity, equality) necessary for such a reading, and without which Butler does not in fact make sense. In less critical contexts, very similar points are made by political

³⁷ Fuller, *The Sociology of Intellectual Life*, pp. 150–51.

theorists Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, who accuses Butler of ‘wild speculation’ on the subject of the subject.³⁸

This is not to say that there are not political philosophers or women’s studies practitioners who engage with Butler as one of their own – far from it – but rather that, *when* allegations such as those I am tracing here are made, we see sometimes rather explicit boundaries being drawn between intellectual production which can be neatly circumscribed within a field, and that which should be considered external to it. It is the *appearance* of discipline without the substance which most vexes these critics: the fear seems to be that less informed readers may mistake Butler’s work for the real thing, and that Butler herself has some mischievous and dark desire that they should. As in her positioning within the women’s studies field, Butler is here both inside and outside the domain of legitimate political philosophy. A disagreement like Nussbaum’s with Butler is not a *philosophical* dispute about better or worse forms of political philosophy, but rather a bolstering of the extant boundaries of the discipline.

In another context Butler discusses, in somewhat derisory form, the defenders of traditionally-conceived philosophy more broadly:

What I have to offer is not exactly an argument, and it is not exactly rigorous, and whether or not it conforms to standards of perspicacity that currently reign in the institution of philosophy is difficult for me to say. [...]

Those of us outside philosophy departments hear [...] judgments from time to time. The judgment usually takes one of these forms: ‘I cannot understand this

³⁸ Nussbaum, ‘The Professor of Parody’, p. 43; Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the ‘Postsocialist’ Condition* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 207-23; Axel Honneth, ‘Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions’, *Inquiry*, 45.4 (2002), 499-519 (p. 503). See also Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, ‘Fashionable Subjects: On Judith Butler and the Causal Idioms of Postmodern Feminist Theory’, *Political Research Quarterly*, 50.3 (1997), 649-74; and, for an overview of the debate, Estelle Ferrarese, ‘Judith Butler’s “Not Particularly Postmodern Insight” of Recognition’, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 37.7 (2011), 759-73.

or I do not see the argument here, all very interesting... but certainly “not” philosophy.’³⁹

Butler is here to some extent embracing the positioning of herself as outside of the ‘properly’ philosophical conversation, but this is precisely to question the very terms of that debate and the circumscription of the discipline within tightly-defined provisions. Through humour, self-deprecation, and a rather ironic, non-deferential attitude to traditional academic values such as rigour, Butler does not rebut claims like Nussbaum’s, but turns them on their heads. This is precisely the sort of intellectual self-assurance of which her critics are mindful, and which leaves Butler particularly susceptible to the allegation of humbuggery. More or less middle-class habitus, further conditioned within an elite education and notably successful early career, works with the boundary-policing of academic fields to place Butler as a pretender to the disciplines in which she rather confidently dabbles. Like Daly, Butler is placed outside the dialogue of the disciplines, and comes to understand herself as in some sense beyond them. Unlike Daly, as we will see, Butler is able to deflect criticisms in a way which, if not always precisely successful in countering the charges, tends to rather confidently invoke, as in the passage above, a quite well-established extra-academic intellectualist tradition. Such a strategy is in marked contrast to Daly’s rather defensive anti-scholarliness. It is perhaps in the literary studies field that Butler has been most fiercely attacked on the grounds of a lack of discipline, and it is here that Butler and her defenders most clearly try to counter the accusation with an appeal to something like intellectual freedom unencumbered by disciplinary restrictions.

³⁹ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, pp. 232-33.

‘BAD WRITING’ AND LITERARY STUDIES

In 1993, Butler moved from her institutional home in philosophy at Johns Hopkins to take up a position in rhetoric and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley. This was also the year in which she published *Bodies that Matter*, her third singly-authored book and a further interrogation into the philosophical underpinnings of gender regulation. What is particularly interesting about *Bodies that Matter* is that, unlike *Subjects of Desire* or *Gender Trouble*, here Butler engages substantially with works of literature. In footnotes to that work, she thanks literary scholars, including Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for inviting her to teach seminars in literature departments, and for showing her the literary applications of the ideas in *Gender Trouble*, as well as how literature and literary theory could themselves enhance those ideas.⁴⁰

Two chapters in that book discuss literature as means of interrogating the construction of sexualities and genders in different historical, geographical, and racial contexts, achieved through readings of Willa Cather’s *My Ántonia* and Nella Larsen’s *Passing*. Both books are read for points of ambiguity in sexual and gendered identity, especially through traces of ambivalence in characters’ internal responses to one other. In her discussion of *My Ántonia*, for instance, Butler understands the central characters through the lens of their purported negotiations of ‘problematic’ sexualities, latent but often emerging in unexpected ways. Such a more or less psychoanalytic reading is evident, for instance, in the following passage:

In the figuring of Jim’s leg as an instrument of disgusting vitality, the loathing of the snake is thus transferred to the narrative ‘I,’ presumably still Jim, who thereby figures his own body as an object of self-loathing and self-destruction.

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 271.

But because this ‘circus monstrosity’ assumed the form of a ‘W,’ implicating yet cutting short, if not castrating, the monstrosity of Willa, who remains not quite named, exceeding and conditioning nomination in the text, it appears that the snake, not unlike *Ántonia* in the prologue, facilitates a transfer of egregious phallicism from Willa to that disgustingly vital leg that appears to belong to Jim, but that might equally well be construed as a free-floating limb of phantasmatic transfer.⁴¹

This is literary studies of a particular sort, then: in particular, it has a clear debt to the side of the literary theory field which is closest to the continental philosophical tradition, and which is concerned to consider the text in terms of its ability to illuminate theory. Having come to literary theory comparatively late (‘once I published on gender theory, I received many invitations from literature departments to speak about something called “theory.” [...] I was somewhat bewildered and began trying to understand what kind of practice this enterprise called “theory” was supposed to be’),⁴² Butler begins producing a particular form of literary theory, similar to that being written by those literary theorists inviting her to speak about ‘theory’ at this time. Butler makes it clear that she is not from a strictly literary tradition and that therefore her work in this area does not necessarily conform to the prescriptions of that field, but nonetheless it is clearly literary theory which she here produces. What we get in these chapters is a kind of theory using literature, relatively uninformed by the broader field of literary studies, since Butler barely references literary theorists in her readings.

Such professed dilettantism is, perhaps, one reason for the sometimes markedly resistant stance toward her in some quarters of literary studies: as in

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

⁴² Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 243. Again, Butler is happy to make a rather self-deprecating and confessional joke, in which she freely admits to her own academic ignorance. She is not the only butt of this joke, however: there is a rather recognisable, if benign, sense of mockery in the inverted commas surrounding ‘theory’.

the other fields we have looked at so far, she is positioned as an outsider who does not in fact know the intellectual rules of the game she wishes to play. There is a kind of intellectual security at play here, which allows Butler to take on this new discipline without necessarily developing a strong knowledge of its workings. This is interesting because Butler is here entering a new academic field through the interventions of others in that field who recognise their own discipline in her work, rather than through the intersections of personal trajectory, educational history, aspiration, and career chances that are more likely to condition entry into an academic field. Butler is literally *invited* (and thereby to some extent consecrated) into a new field of which, she discloses, she possesses comparatively little knowledge. We can see field having an explicit effect on her intellectual production here, then, but it is only in conjunction with an intellectually secure habitus that Butler is able to produce the kind of literary theory she does. And whilst the invitational nature of her induction into the field might make us suspect that Butler has finally found an intellectual home here, many responses to her literary theoretical forays show this not to be the case, and indeed invoke very similar critical tropes to those she experiences in other disciplines. Although invited into a particular sub-field of literary studies, the general field exclusions which Butler faced in other areas are not markedly different here.

One of the most well-known critiques of Butler is her receipt of the *Philosophy and Literature* Bad Writing Prize.⁴³ The incident became a minor international news story and sparked a response from Butler in the *New York Times* as well as an entire edited volume more or less refuting the charge, to which she herself contributed. Much like Alan Sokal's *Social Text* hoax three

⁴³ Whilst *Philosophy and Literature* is a general-interest humanities journal, it is overwhelmingly literary scholars who have been awarded Bad Writing Prizes.

years previously (which appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*),⁴⁴ this apparently minor intellectual squabble on the finer points of good written form reveals much more about the internal conflicts of the humanities than it might at first appear. Bourdieu discusses these conflicts, which from the outside may seem quite peculiar for their vociferousness, as a reflection on the remarkable investments academics place in their intellectual pursuits as markers of cultural capital:

Nothing resembles a religious war more than ‘academic squabbles’ or debates on cultural matters. If it can seem easier to reform social security than spelling conventions or literary history curricula, this is because, in defending even the most arbitrary aspect of a cultural arbitrary, the holders of cultural capital – and undoubtedly more than any others the holders of petty portfolios [...] – are defending not only their assets but also something like their mental integrity.⁴⁵

These beliefs (that one spelling of a word or construction of a sentence is objectively superior to another) do not appear to be imperative for the functioning of intellectual work, but rather do additional *cultural* work in marking out groups and establishing relations of greater and lesser domination in a field. Most positions in a field can draw on strength from some kind of capital, so these relations of domination are rarely straightforward to read. And it is not necessary to offer an assessment of these disputes that is as disparaging as Bourdieu’s: if we take seriously the importance of field for the Bourdieusian model, there is nothing surprising or ridiculous about the investments individuals place in maintaining their positions, nor in the fact that the principles of valuation within them do not

⁴⁴ See the editors of *Lingua Franca*, *The Sokal Hoax: The Sham that Shook the Academy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. by Laetitia C. Clough (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), p. 6.

always or even often correlate to objective necessity. In the contests over legitimate academic language in literary studies which emerged around the Bad Writing Prize, we might discover much wider and more deep-seated issues which continue to structure and delimit the field.

Begun in 1995 by the journal *Philosophy and Literature*'s then-editor Denis Dutton, an aesthetics scholar and cultural critic, the Bad Writing Prize was established to give academics a chance to vent their frustrations at scholarly sentences understood to be so verbose, jargon-riddled, or grammatically inaccurate that they are effectively incomprehensible. The nominated sentences were reproduced in the journal and a series of press releases, alongside comments from the nominator (if sufficiently pithy) and from Dutton, remarking upon the particularly inexplicable elements of the case. Butler's triumph in the contest in 1998 (the year in which Homi Bhabha came second) became comparatively well-known, leading to a public intellectual debate in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Salon*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*.⁴⁶

In a *Wall Street Journal* response to the controversy, Dutton discusses his own thoughts on what bad writing in academia constitutes. Although still investing his remarks on the topic with humour, his conception of what it is to write obscurely or jargonistically is at times explained in more serious terms: bad writers of Butler's type degrade the whole intellectual endeavour by *professing to do something they do not in fact do*:

⁴⁶ Eli Thorkelson, 'The Case of the Bad Writing Contest: Literary Theory as Commodity and Literary Theorists as Brands', *Decasia* (2007) <<http://decasia.org/papers/badwriting.pdf>> [accessed 4 October 2011] (para. 1 of 16). The Prize and Butler's victory in it is a relative common-place in discussions of both Butler's work specifically and intellectual 'bad form' more broadly. Nussbaum invokes it approvingly without any recognition of the more conservative aspects of the journal ('The Professor of Parody', p. 39); in a recent *Observer* article on cuts to the arts and social sciences, Nick Cohen begins by quoting the prize-winning sentence as an example of the self-serving obscurantism endemic in the academy. Nick Cohen, 'Academia Plays into the Hands of the Right', *Observer*, 30 January 2011 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jan/30/nick-cohen-higher-education-cuts>> [accessed 25 May 2011] (para. 1 of 8).

The pretentiousness of the worst academic writing betrays it as a kind of intellectual kitsch, analogous to bad art that declares itself ‘profound’ or ‘moving’ not by displaying its own intrinsic value but by borrowing these values from elsewhere. Just as a cigar box is elevated by a Rembrandt painting, or a living room is dignified by sets of finely bound but unread books, so these kitsch theorists mimic the effects of rigor and profundity without actually doing serious intellectual work.⁴⁷

You don’t have to be Bourdieu to wonder if there is a trace of cultural privilege behind the analogy of ‘bad writing’ to kitsch, a cultural form devalued for its failure to grasp what ‘real’ culture is: that is, for its blindness to the fact that artistic value is *intrinsic* and cannot be successfully imitated.⁴⁸ What Bourdieu and much of critical cultural studies have argued is that this understanding of authenticity in culture is itself blind to its own privilege and to the vastly unequal cultural capital with which consumers begin: the conception of an ‘authentic’ relation to culture which is able to identify and produce work with ‘intrinsic’ value bolsters class divisions by insisting on kinds of aesthetic and critical competence as if they were universally available rather than rarefied, unequally distributed and, in terms of content, more or less arbitrary.⁴⁹ The assumption of a *particular kind* of cultural competence emerges through

⁴⁷ Denis Dutton, ‘Language Crimes: A Lesson in How Not to Write, Courtesy of the Professoriate’, *Wall Street Journal*, 5 February 1999 <http://denisdutton.com/language_crimes.htm> [accessed 28 May 2010] (para. 10 of 11). Dutton argues in more scholarly fashion for the distinction between authentic works and imitations (here, artistic forgeries) in ‘Artistic Crimes’, in *The Forger’s Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. by Denis Dutton (London: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 172-87; and in favour of traditional cultural hierarchies (‘We do not have to apologise for preferring science to superstition, Goethe to gangsta rap. Such values in themselves imply nothing about social hierarchies’) in ‘The Prehistoric Origins of Anti-Elitism’, in *In Praise of Elitism*, ed. by Charles Murray *et al.* (St Leonards, New South Wales: Centre for Independent Studies, 2008), pp. 27-31 (p. 31).

⁴⁸ See Ruth Holliday and Tracey Potts, *Kitsch! Cultural Politics and Taste* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984), pp. 11-96.

offhand remarks in press releases for the contest: '1995 was to bad prose what 1685 was to good music.'⁵⁰

The analogy of kitsch with pretentious writing might tell us, then, something about the particular sections of the literary studies field being criticised by the Prize and also those being defended. The dispute both is and is not about broader class groupings: the relative autonomy of academic fields means that class is by no means explicitly invoked in the dispute, and since all involved are academics there is a class homogeneity when compared to social differences outside the academy; but through the implicit invocation of classed values (elegant and easy language as against *laboured* discourse such as Butler's), and political differences roughly corresponding to conservatism and progressivism, broader social disparities are certainly evoked. By appealing to a distinction between *real* literary studies and what appears to be it but is not, Dutton and his cohorts again police the boundaries of the field against those who would see a loosening of those borders.

The edited collection *Just Being Difficult?* seeks to interrogate the terms of the Prize as well as broader currents criticising problematic language use in the humanities. Very scholarly in its approach, it aims to bring together disparate voices to offer a more considered review of the debate and the larger issues underpinning it: 'The essays are less about proving the innocence of those accused than about critically interrogating the terms and assumptions of the allegations,' as the back cover has it.⁵¹ This would seem a very important contribution to the debate then, were it not for the quite logical point that the brand of humanistic critique thereby practised (interrogation of 'common-sense' assertions in the interest of a critical, often politically and sociologically informed reading of critique itself) is in fact the sort of critique most likely to

⁵⁰ Answers on a postcard, please. Denis Dutton, 'The Bad Writing Contest Press Releases, 1996-1998', nd <[http:// denisdutton.com/bad_writing.htm](http://denisdutton.com/bad_writing.htm)> [accessed 28 May 2010] (para. 26 of 29).

⁵¹ Culler and Lamb, *Just Being Difficult?* back cover.

be carried out by post-structuralists, post-colonialists, and others associated with the linguistic turn and with post-Marxist politics in the academy: in other words, by those most likely to have been awarded Bad Writing Prizes. Contributors to the volume include Rey Chow, Jonathan Culler, and Butler herself (and the text also includes an interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), and while these writers have very different writing styles from one another, they can be said to be positioned in roughly similar spaces in the literary studies field. This is, as was discussed in relation to Butler's literary readings in *Bodies that Matter*, the area close to continental philosophy, tending to produce literary readings which seek to draw out the political implications of texts and to illustrate contemporary political and philosophical theory through literature. Although, as Culler points out in his contribution to the volume, this branch of literary criticism hardly has a monopoly on obscure or inward-looking language in the humanities, nonetheless these are the quarters targeted by the Prize and which therefore, quite rationally, seek to defend their practice.⁵² In their very measured and complex interrogations, then, we see these literary theorists reinscribe the debate into their *own* terms, casting the accusation of bad writing as 'common-sensical': uninterrogated, pre-critical. The point is not that Butler and others *should have* written in some way which bridges the gap between defenders of linguistic clarity and those who would interrogate the concept (as if that gap could be unproblematically bridged), but rather that there is an important impasse here which cannot be fully accounted for by naivety, obstinacy, or a lack of reflexivity on either side.

⁵² Culler analyses the work of analytic philosopher Robert Nozick to show that a complex, jargonistic sentence containing formal logic may need to be worked on by the reader, and that this is not necessarily an act of violence on the part of the writer: '[A particular sentence of Nozick's] is certainly ugly, awkward, and hard to follow (a potential prizewinner, I should have thought!), but of course one *can* follow it if one is interested in the project of trying, with elaborate invented examples, to work out what logically would have to be the case for some *y* to count as a continuation of *x* and all the conceivable configurations that might complicate such ascriptions of identity.' 'Bad Writing and Good Philosophy', in *Just Being Difficult?*, ed. by Culler and Lamb, pp. 43-57 (p. 44; original emphases).

We can see the difficulty particularly clearly in Mark Bauerlein's review of *Just Being Difficult?* in *Philosophy and Literature*. The review is written from a relatively distanced perspective, despite being published in the journal which housed the Prize, and whose journal description still states that '*Philosophy and Literature* challenges the cant and pretensions of academic priesthods through its assortment of lively, wide-ranging essays, notes, and reviews that are written in clear, jargon-free prose'.⁵³ Bauerlein refers to the journal as '*Philosophy and Literature*' rather than 'this journal,' creating the sense that he is not there to defend the journal's official line.⁵⁴ The review is relatively balanced and comprehensive, arguing that much of the thrust of *Just Being Difficult?* is sound and important. Nonetheless, Bauerlein's overall argument is that, by constructing a collective rejoinder so presuming of theoretical knowledge and navel-gazing in outlook, respondents like Butler have missed the opportunity actively to engage with the discussion outside of their own terms: 'The problem is that the contributors express [their questions about 'bad writing' judgements] in precisely the manner that exposed them to the Bad Writing tag in the first place.'⁵⁵

This is more or less the argument made above, apart from this: for Bauerlein, this is a mistake, bred of hubris, which effectively does for the contributors' chance to engage effectively in the debate. What Bauerlein insists upon is that the defenders of 'bad writing' meet the defenders of clarity on the latter's terms, and that fruitful debate can only commence once such a common-place has been established. Similarly, the contributors to *Just Being Difficult?* insist that debate must commence from critical and political interrogation: the common-place of their own critical practice. The impasse is

⁵³ Johns Hopkins University Press, *Philosophy and Literature* journal description, nd <http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/philosophy_and_literature/> [accessed 28 May 2010] (para. 1 of 1).

⁵⁴ Mark Bauerlein, 'Bad Writing's Back', *Philosophy and Literature*, 28.1 (2004), 180-91 (p. 180 *et passim*).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

complicated by different conceptions of the dominant mode in the field. Both positions see themselves as relatively dominated and therefore subversive of an orthodoxy: for the post-structuralist critics, the orthodoxy is a traditional conception of 'neutral' or conservative literary studies; for their critics, a new literary theory which has quickly come to dominate their discipline. Although both positions are clearly aware of the political differences between them – broadly speaking, a conservative call for literary criticism to observe its more traditional remit of transmitting a heritage, as against a leftist concern to question that heritage as well as issues outside the confines of literary studies traditionally conceived – there tends to be an assumption that such political beliefs are the outcome of volition rather than the complex interplay of biography, education, career prospects, institution, and inculcated preferences.

Although the conservatism at the centre of Butler's exclusions *here* is markedly different from the forms of institutional vulnerability which condition her exclusions in women's studies, for example, the effect is broadly similar. A kind of intellectual confidence in written style, conditioned by both relatively privileged habitus and an early, elite philosophical education, in conjunction with institutional vulnerability or cultural conservatism in particular fields, leads to her reception as a disciplinary alien and intellectual charlatan. Due to precisely this intellectual self-assurance, however, Butler can deal with these exclusions through a strategy which seems unavailable to Daly in her very different position: through a conversion of her accumulated capital, she is able to produce herself as a politically engaged, cross-disciplinary public *intellectual*.

INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL AND THE MOVE AWAY FROM DISCIPLINARY FIELDS

If it is possible to read for a change in Butler's concerns as well as her written style in the early years of this century, it might be quite reasonable to connect this both to the events of September 11th 2001 and to the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is clear that Butler has become deeply concerned with those issues and has developed a line of close reading of political rhetoric and the media on these and other global concerns, including the conflict in Israel-Palestine and detention without trial in Guantanamo Bay. She is now a regular contributor in both the mainstream and left-wing press, and a number of her recent books have been edited collections of such contributions, speeches, and academic think-pieces. Whilst clearly these developments in Butler's work are connected to political changes and her responses to them, it is possible to analyse such movement, in addition, through the lens of field and, more specifically, Butler's increasing role as public intellectual and movement away from academic disciplines as crucial determiners for her work. Such a movement, I argue, comes through relative security, institutional and otherwise.

In their recent introductory text to Butler's political thought, Samuel Chambers and Terrell Carver argue for an understanding of her work which asserts its *fully* political character. They are concerned to counter the idea, which we encountered above in the critique of Martha Nussbaum and others, that Butler's work is not 'really' political, but rather adopts the veneer of political theory without an adequate conception of the work that that discipline does. Whilst many of the critics above argued against Butler as true political philosopher on the grounds of a lack of foundations (whether a construction of the subject as foundation, or foundation based on political norms), Chambers and Carver argue that it is due to a concentration on

Gender Trouble that political theorists come to understand her within the narrower remit of gender studies. In places, the authors clearly disagree with the idea that gender politics either are not real politics, or are so narrowly focused that a primary identification as a feminist theorist precludes the possibility of being a political philosopher – ‘as if that area were separate from politics or only played a marginal role.’⁵⁶ At the same time, there is ambivalence about whether Butler is to be considered a gender theorist *and* a political theorist without apology or contradiction; or rather as a political theorist primarily, whose slightly unfortunate affiliation with gender theory should not distract from the wider implications of her ideas:

For better or worse, however, Butler has self-identified as a feminist and engaged in recognisably feminist debates, and in any case self-identifies as a woman [!]. In that way she’s always going to be ‘within’ rather than ‘without,’ and cannot be easily dismissed or ignored.⁵⁷

Chambers and Carver point to the chronology of Butler’s publications to explain the way she has been received in the political philosophy field: because she made her name with *Gender Trouble*, she remains ‘tied’ to the narrow considerations of gender rather than the *broad*er political issues with which she has concerned herself latterly.

The idea that there are certain concerns which are over-arching and more fundamental to political theory than others (specifically those associated with identity politics such as gender and sexuality) has been criticised by Butler, especially in her rejoinder to Nancy Fraser’s *Justice Interruptus*. There, Butler argues that the division of political forms into those concerned with ‘redistribution’ (of material goods) and those with ‘recognition’ (of

⁵⁶ Samuel A. Chambers and Terrell Carver, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p 158. There are some slightly strange connotations to this passage, not least the implication that Butler will inevitably remain a part of feminism because she is a woman.

particular kinds of lives and identifications), especially where such a distinction tends to map quite neatly onto traditional forms of anti-capitalism on the one side, and every other form of progressive politics on the other, tends to miss the intermingling of redistribution and recognition in just about every political claim. She cites, for instance, state regulation of the family, where non-heterosexual couples and non-monogamous groupings are not recognised as family units, and this non-recognition leads to material and economic effects in unequal taxation and property rights.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, if we comprehend the understanding of feminism as narrow and in contradistinction to broader political considerations such as international relations, as a common-place of academic constructions rather than a political actuality, we can understand Butler's move toward these more 'general' political themes through the notion of generality as a mark of intellectual security.

In much (although not all) of her recent work – in particular *Frames of War* and *Parting Ways* – Butler develops writings which could be considered 'generalist' in a number of respects. Firstly, these recent works cover topical and widely-considered issues such as censorship around the Israel-Palestine conflict, responses to photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib, and media justification for the invasion of Iraq. Secondly, whilst still often written in complex language, these writings are relatively accessible to a non-specialist audience due to a comparative lack of allusions to other scholarly sources. And thirdly, these recent works are substantially made up of re-edited, previously published articles, some from academic journals but many from the left-wing press (*The Nation*, *London Review of Books*).⁵⁹ This generality is in marked contrast to, for instance *Subjects of Desire*, which as we have seen is written

⁵⁸ Judith Butler, 'Merely Cultural', *Social Text*, 52/53.15 (1997), 265-77 (p. 273).

⁵⁹ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009); *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

for a scholarly and even a specifically philosophical audience; or *Gender Trouble*, which is written within the context of philosophical women's studies. These collections of articles do not have a specific disciplinary focus, but rather constitute a broad intellectual review of the current cultural, political, and media climate.

It is possible to understand this development away from disciplinary centres and toward a broader conception of intellectual work as the mark of institutional, intellectual, and stylistic *security*. Either at an earlier stage in her own career, or as an academic who had accrued less cultural capital through time, Butler might be less likely to develop this line of broad critique since institutional structures do not tend to support such work. In a recent interview, Butler reflects on being refused for a job at an earlier stage in her career; an anecdote which illuminates, perhaps, her current institutional security:

I was once denied a job on the most wonderful basis. They said, 'We tried to consider you for this job, but we could find no category under which to assess you.' It was a great moment. 'Thank you,' I said, 'thank you, this is a gift.'⁶⁰

For those of us uncertain of our disciplinary home and of the current job market, this story is rather the stuff of nightmares. Whilst Butler goes on to talk about the ambivalence that academic disciplines hold toward innovation and originality – these are praised as the highest academic achievements, yet in most everyday experiences it is observance of the rules which is rewarded – she does not talk about what is in fact the reason for her failure to get the job (not innovation in the broad sense but her lack of disciplinary focus), nor the way that capacity for and acceptability of innovation as well as disciplinary eclecticism is unequally distributed in favour of those who are dominant in

⁶⁰ Judith Butler *et al.*, 'Conversation with Judith Butler II', in *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life*, ed. by Bronwyn Davies (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 87-93 (p. 88).

academic fields. Butler is able to be jocular and even self-deprecating about her lack of observance of academic strictures ('What I have to offer is not exactly an argument, and it is not exactly rigorous'), and for the most part this does not have negative repercussions.⁶¹

At the same time, Butler has open to her a variety of contexts, academic and non-academic, in which she can publish, and so my argument is not that Butler has *become* a general intellectual. Rather, it is with an increasing intellectual cachet behind her that she is able to write in different contexts and for different readerships. 2005's *Giving an Account of Oneself*, for instance, is an abstract work of ontology making repeated references to the history of philosophy and offering lengthy interrogations of continental philosophers.⁶² Nonetheless it is not *necessary* for Butler to self-identify as a philosopher or to make sure that her work in general is 'sufficiently' academic, since her accrual of academic capital in a variety of fields positions her closer to the pole of the 'free-floating intellectual'. Her position is completely different from the earliest stages of her career, and what she recounts as the compulsion to publish a 'properly' philosophical monograph, as soon as possible.

Certainly, this positioning gives Butler no small amount of privilege in academic contexts. At a time when her current institution, the University of California (one of the most prestigious public universities in the American higher education system), suffers from serious financial hardship, she has accepted a two-year fellowship at private Columbia University, with the assurance that if she wishes to stay, a full-time post will be offered.⁶³ Yet it simultaneously and paradoxically keeps her in a marginal position with regard

⁶¹ Butler *Undoing Gender*, p. 232.

⁶² Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

⁶³ Sara Grossman, 'Speculation Surrounds Whether Judith Butler Will Remain at UC Berkeley', *Daily Californian*, 13 March 2012 <<http://www.dailycal.org/2012/03/12/speculation-surrounds-whether-judith-butler-will-remain-at-uc-berkeley/>> [accessed 13th March 2012] (para. 5 of 10).

to *specific* academic disciplines. In a review of *Frames of War* for the journal *Radical Philosophy*, Mark Neocleous argues that the book is so devoid of academic references that Butler ends up sounding as if she believes she has invented every common-place of leftist political philosophy.⁶⁴ What this argument might miss is the extent to which Butler has not exactly written an academic book at all, but rather a series of broad intellectual interrogations – there is a pay-off between her academic capital and her more broadly intellectual capital, so that she is able to use her relative fame to reach a wider audience at the expense of a more secure disciplinary position.

CONCLUSION

This pay-off between academic and intellectual capital may be, in fact, what we have seen throughout Butler's movement through fields. *Subjects of Desire*, Butler's first book, remained quite firmly within the philosophical tradition, and she subsequently distanced herself, albeit affectionately, from that book: in the preface to the second edition she remarks that it is her 'juvenilia', that she regrets publishing it so early but did so due to the pressures of the job market: 'Any revised version of this work would be a new work altogether, one that I am not prepared to embark upon at this time.'⁶⁵ Yet by the time she comes to publish *Gender Trouble* three years later, she is in a position of relative institutional security, having published her first monograph and with a permanent job in philosophy. It is only at this stage (that is, in the context of favourable institutional conditions) that Butler begins her trajectory through new disciplinary fields.

⁶⁴ Mark Neocleous, 'You've Been Framed', *Radical Philosophy*, 158 (2009), 53-55 (p. 53).

⁶⁵ Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, p. viii.

Although *Gender Trouble*, as we saw, was not immediately positioned as outside of women's studies, it *comes to be constructed* as a work which instituted a break in that discipline, and even as the instigator of gender studies as a discipline discrete from women's studies. Thus Butler is simultaneously positioned as a looming figure within women's studies, and as a figure outside of the field. This conception is compounded by her move since *Bodies that Matter* away from gender as a specific focus in her work: 2004's *Undoing Gender*, for instance, tends to focus on related issues of sexuality and kinship, rather than the specific construction of gender from the earlier book. As we saw, Clare Hemmings has recently argued for a new story about Butler which shows her continuing conversation with feminist theory, but we might seek to supplement this new narrative with an understanding of how the old one came about: through the bolstering of disciplinary and political boundaries, where such boundaries are considered imperative to secure what appear to be institutionally endangered forms of academic work. Given the struggles that women's studies has endured to become an established discipline, its continuing difficulties through higher education cuts on both sides of the Atlantic, and its particular susceptibility to both rhetorical and legal challenges on grounds of sex discrimination, we may be able to understand why women's studies scholars police their borders in ways which might appear conservative in other contexts. As I will argue in the next chapter, we must take the historical and institutional conditions of women's studies' inception and continuation into account in order to better understand the exclusions it enacts: if *Gender Trouble* is received in some quarters as a hyper-critical and external attack on the precepts of feminist theory, this should be connected to the specific field vulnerabilities which condition that response, as well as the social, educational, and institutional conditions which provide Butler the intellectual security to produce such work.

By contrast, as we saw in relation to the literary studies field, it can be a mark of disciplinary as well as general political conservatism to insist on a circumscription of the type of work which is *really* in a field, as well as the style of writing most fitting to it. Again, we find Butler positioned outside of the field, as an interloper displaying some of the external features of the discipline, but lacking authentic engagement with it. Such an emphasis on Butler's inauthenticity is even more pronounced within political philosophy, where she is often taken to display a veneer of political thought which lacks rigorous engagement with the real terms of the field. This is not to say that these are the only engagements with Butler going on, but rather that these stories emerge in relation to Butler at those points where disciplinary vulnerabilities make themselves felt. We can distinguish between the conservatism of a dominant pole seeking to bolster its distinction (notably through the reproduction of norms of elegance in written style), and the defensiveness of an institutionally insecure discipline already vulnerable to attacks on the basis of what are taken to be its spurious foundations, but even this distinction is not clear-cut: conservatism can itself be understood as a form of intellectual defensiveness, even if institutional vulnerability in such cases is less pronounced than that in new disciplines such as women's studies.

Like Daly, Butler was an educational success story who entered a highly consecrated, largely conservative discipline, but grew disaffected with the circumscriptions of that field; seeking to contribute to other intellectual endeavours, she experienced sometimes quite punitive disciplinary exclusions, both in these new fields and that of her original training. Despite these apparent similarities, Butler's and Daly's trajectories are in fact very different. Daly suffered those exclusions as fundamental barriers to her institutional and academic progress: she adopted a defensive anti-academicism and increasingly developed a model of feminist community from which many

feminists have felt excluded, and was forcibly retired at the age of seventy-one from Boston College after increasing threats of legal action, never having made professor. Butler, by contrast, was able to convert disciplinary exclusions into intellectual capital: to renegotiate the terms of those exclusions to get to a self-understanding which was not narrow, defensive, or anti-scholastic, but wide-reaching and engaged. She made professor when she was thirty-four.

Both feminists negotiate their situations, but those situations are very different. It is both habitus and field which condition the differences. We can certainly point towards class habitus as what helped Butler develop a very assured intellectual style, while Daly developed, in the years following her first conflict with Boston College, a rather insecure and liminal speaking position. We should certainly take seriously style as a marker of habitus; but habitus is not the full story. The states of their respective fields when they entered them as intellectual producers were markedly different, and this surely had real effects on their subsequent careers. The philosophical field in the 1980s may have been conservative and misogynistic, but the theological field of the 1960s was quite comprehensively so, and the theological establishment could exclude Daly on the basis of her feminist politics, and simply for being a woman, quite unashamedly. The options available to Daly and Butler were ultimately very different, despite apparent similarities in their situations, and it is habitus and field in conjunction which make the extent of these differences legible.

In this chapter, I have argued that conversion of academic into intellectual capital is one strategy open to at least some feminists when they suffer institutional and disciplinary difficulties. If we can think of Butler's approach as ultimately more successful than Daly's (at the very least, in terms of the levels of institutional and financial support it might afford), this is not necessarily an argument that it is more desirable. To some extent, Butler must

sacrifice her commitment to any narrow disciplinary focus in order to attain the position of general intellectual: and that includes a commitment to the project of women's studies. In the next chapter, I will look in more detail at the notions of the *intellectual* and the *academic*, and at what strategies are available for feminists who maintain a commitment both to women's studies as a necessarily circumscribed disciplinary field (the academic function) and to public engagement and activism (the intellectual function). Both Butler and Daly ultimately refuse (or are unable to live with) the tensions of this split: Butler becomes a public intellectual at the expense of disciplinary circumscription, while Daly likewise gives up such intellectual bounds, but to become a defensive and largely unread polemicist. I will turn now to the alternative feminist possibility of living *within* the tensions of the intellectual and academic functions: to a potentially messy but also livelier conception of women's studies, as a site for negotiation of the kinds of difficulties Daly and Butler have had. This is not to argue that Butler and Daly should have behaved differently, but rather that as feminist theorists we ourselves can imagine a new way of being feminists in the academy.

Ch. 4

Academics, Intellectuals, Feminists

Butler and Daly in and out of Women's Studies

Regardless of how hard we have worked, of whether our will is strong or weak, our faith is good or bad, or we put our current theory into practice, we will not succeed until we reconceptualise the project at hand. In fact, we must give up on the idea that we can fully answer these problems and look to different types of strategies that are both alive to the contradictions inherent in the university and also support the feminist project of women's studies. We must give up on the progress narrative in which women's studies is always proceeding toward a future in which all will come right in the end.

Janet R. Jakobsen¹

In their respective movements within and across academic fields, both Daly and Butler attempt to come to terms with the restrictions as well as opportunities afforded by disciplinary norms. The result is sometimes, perhaps particularly at early stages in their careers, a more or less self-conscious adoption of those norms and circumscriptions, and sometimes an ambivalent or playful approach to them; but often, in the end, it is a rejection of the notion that their work should be disciplinarily circumscribed at all. Just as Daly comes to see her work as no longer a part of the theological tradition, but instead as a contribution to some broader, de-institutionalised conception of feminist intellectual community, so Butler no longer understands her work to be contained by philosophy, but rather to exist in some wider intellectual space. Moreover, both feminists not only reject the traditional humanities from which they emerged, but also *women's studies* as a disciplinarily

¹ Janet R. Jakobsen, 'Different Differences: Theory and the Practice of Women's Studies', in *Women's Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics*, ed. by Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins (London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 125-42 (pp. 127-28).

delimited institutional and intellectual field. Since Butler and Daly are themselves to some extent rejected by those fields, the processes conditioning their movement away from disciplinary circumscription should be understood, as in previous chapters, in terms of a non-foundational symbiosis between *habitus* and *field*: not purely as intellectual volition, but also as products of both institutional and broader social conditions. Nonetheless, in this chapter I not only look at the reasons for these movements in institutional and sociological terms; I also turn to what it *means* for these disciplines to be rejected in this way, and also to what might have happened if Daly and Butler had, in fact, been able to find homes in women's studies in particular. The goal of this turn is not to castigate these feminists for their intellectual and institutional choices, but rather to offer alternatives to those choices for feminist academics in general.

In this gradual rejection of disciplinary norms, both feminists can be understood as rejecting a certain formulation of their work as *academic*: as constrained by the academy, that heavily policed, protectionist, and rather joyless bastion of institutional privilege and intellectual constraint. Although Butler and Daly ultimately adopted different strategies in their negotiations of the academy and the intellectual life, strategies to which they had unequal access and which proved to accrue very different levels of success for them, they can both be said to move away from something like self-understanding as academics, and toward something more like the role of the *intellectual*. In this seemingly looser and less constrained model for intellectual work, Butler and Daly do not see themselves as restricted by institutional or disciplinary norms but rather as cross-disciplinary, politically engaged contributors to broader debates.

In this chapter, the changes in Butler's and Daly's relations to disciplinary fields and to academia in general will be related to the theory of

habitus and field discussed in Chapter One: the idea that institutional context and embodied personal history work together in ways which sometimes reproduce and at other times subvert that individual history. In addition, these biographical changes will be linked to a broader series of debates. Firstly, the chapter will interrogate theories of intellectuals. If Butler and Daly come to adopt practices which might more closely be allied to the intellectual than the academic role – seeking to address broad, non-academic audiences, for example, and expressing concerns about the limitations inherent to institutionalised knowledge – then what, precisely, has been said about those roles, and how far do such theories apply to contemporary feminists? Here I concentrate on three aspects of intellectual theories. Firstly, I look at the distinctions drawn between intellectuals and academics. Secondly, I turn to debates around the relation between progressive intellectuals and workers within the Marxist tradition, broadly conceived. I am particularly interested here in the differences between workers and women as the intellectual’s ‘constituents’ (that is, possible differences between the socialist and the feminist intellectual), and argue that differences such as these should be taken into account when examining feminist intellectual practice. Finally in this section, I discuss the notion of the intellectual’s dialectical or antagonistic consciousness as framed by Jean-Paul Sartre, and examine the use of such an understanding for a theory of the feminist intellectual and of women’s studies as discipline in particular.

I then turn to discussions surrounding the idea of women’s studies as both institutional and intellectual disciplinary space.² Despite their continuing, stated commitments to feminism, and the persistence of the university as the space for their intellectual lives, neither Butler nor Daly ever

² As outlined in the introduction, I understand women’s studies to mean a discrete intellectual community of academics working on gender, who are largely in conversation *with one another*, as opposed to individual academics working on gender in a way circumscribed by the norms of other disciplines.

found an institutional home in women's studies. This is despite that space being perhaps the cogent place for feminism within the university, particularly in the American context; and despite both feminists' eventual unhappiness with more traditional disciplinary configurations. Through an account of a series of debates and tensions within women's studies (over whether, for instance, it ought to seek eventual integration into the traditional disciplines, or instead maintain institutional autonomy; and what the category 'women' ought to designate), and a general argument that women's studies can allow for a space in which such tensions can be lived productively, this section tries to understand both why Butler and Daly could not see themselves, for the most part, within this intellectual space, and what might have happened if they had.

My argument is that the discipline of women's studies both alleviates some of the tensions of the intellectual function pointed to by theorists such as Sartre, and also creates new ones. Because the role of the women's studies academic in fact implies some of the characteristics commonly ascribed to the intellectual (explicit political commitment, for instance), this disciplinary space could be the site for a fruitful refusal of an antagonistic relation between the academic and intellectual functions. I argue finally that the dialectical tensions that Sartre observes in the notion of politically committed intellectual labour should not be resolved but rather lived out productively; and that when Daly and Butler reject (and indeed are rejected by) women's studies, this potential for a more dialectical relation to intellectual production is lost. The argument is not that these feminists should have overcome the institutional, biographical, and social forces which made some intellectual routes easier for them than others; but rather that other feminists might take from my accounts of their trajectories a set of potential strategies for negotiating similar conditions.

DALY AND BUTLER IN THE DISCIPLINES

In both Butler's and Daly's early careers, they appear to maintain a more or less straightforward commitment to the humanities from which they emerged. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, this apparent loyalty to their (especially in Butler's case) rather conventional academic training, can be related to the general restrictions of traditional fields of intellectual production – preference for disciplinary observance and suspicion of perceived intellectual dilettantism, for example – as well as the both habitual and strategic tendency for young academics in particular to observe those restrictions quite rigidly. Not only because they understood that it was likely to be the best recognised route into the academic life, but also because they were, as both acknowledge, to some extent the products of their educations, did Daly and Butler adopt intellectual practices quite closely aligned to their respective disciplines. In short, in these instances *habitus* and *field* worked together, in what we might consider relatively conservative ways, to inaugurate both feminists' careers in intellectual production.

Despite its feminist theme, Daly's first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, was not radical in its style. Academic theology in the 1960s included, if not in a mainstream or dominant position then as an emerging, commonly recognised and growing voice, radical and 'secular' theologies, as well as a very substantial reformist contingent. Although the first book seeking to develop specifically feminist reforms to Christian practice, Daly's earliest work, as she acknowledges, emerges partially because of the general climate of reform developing in particular around the Catholic Church at the time of Vatican II.³ As a trend which was emerging in part from within academic theology itself, this reformism was not straightforwardly external, but rather a viable and at least partially legitimate intellectual option for theological

³ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex: With the Feminist Postchristian Introduction and New Archaic Afterwords by the Author*, 3rd edn (Boston: Beacon, 1985), pp. 7-11.

scholars at that time. *The Church and the Second Sex* obeys the general strictures of academic theology, entering a scholarly debate in a measured way, drawing on a wealth of academic work in the field and referring to scripture not only as an historical source to be critiqued, but also as an authority on the word of God. This is not only an historical and sociological reading of the Bible and the Christian past, but a disciplinarily *theological* comparison of different aspects of that tradition, taking as one of its beginnings the theological common-place that God's intentions can in fact be known, through revelation and scripture, and that such intentions can be compared to the history of human Churches. Irrespective of the fact that it draws on theories being developed in the emerging women's liberation movement, and is therefore politically unconventional, Daly's first book is certainly a work of theology and in terms of disciplinary orientation is not marginal in the same way as her later work.

Similarly, Butler's first book, *Subjects of Desire*, can be considered the product of a fairly unambiguous disciplinary position. Although Butler herself has latterly drawn attention to the 'deinstitutionalized' nature of her coming to philosophy through books discovered in the family basement and extra synagogue classes imposed as punishment, her institutional experiences, certainly compared to Daly's, were rather conventional in disciplinary and educational terms. Moving from a prestigious liberal arts college (Bennington) to an Ivy League institution (Yale), including a spate in Germany studying with Hans Georg Gadamer under scholarship, Butler maintained an institutional affiliation with philosophy throughout her higher education; and the continental philosophy toward which she moved, as she tells us, was not that of post-structuralism or the literary turn, but a rather more 'conservative' brand of Hegelianism.⁴ *Subjects of Desire* constitutes a work of close textual

⁴ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 234; 238.

analysis very clearly within the disciplinary remit of philosophy, and barely concerned with any social or political implications or applications of the ideas it explores.

In Butler's and Daly's early commitments to disciplinarily circumscribed intellectual production, they seem to be developing a quite *academic* conception of their work. By this I mean that both understand their work to be within the disciplinary remit of their traditional humanities (quite unambiguously, philosophy for Butler; and, despite the more eclectic nature of her early training, theology for Daly), and their roles to be tied to the institutional conditions of that work's production: the university and the disciplines. Their work is certainly affected by conditions external to those narrow disciplinary concerns, but nonetheless both maintain a relation to their roles in which institutional considerations, in particular those of disciplinary good form, take precedence. This being so, what set of conditions resulted in both Daly's and Butler's subsequent moving out from those disciplinary homes, and toward something closer to the role of the de-institutionalised intellectual?

DISOWNING THE DISCIPLINES

Daly and Butler, in rather different ways, come to distance themselves from the disciplinary fields in which they had initially invested their intellectual and emotional energies. Although this distancing from the disciplines appears to be similar in the two cases, in fact there are crucial differences: the movements are clearly legible in terms of an increasing sense of confidence associated with continuing academic success for Butler, while for Daly the reasons are more complex, and the success more ambiguous. This discrepancy between the reasons for their disciplinary trajectories also partially explains their eventual

successes as intellectuals when they leave their disciplinary circumscriptions as academics: Butler's whole history, as we saw in the previous chapter, affords her the kind of general intellectual capital to which Daly simply does not have access.

Despite the eclectic nature of her early experiences with higher education (accumulating degrees in English, religion, philosophy and, finally, sacred theology), Daly taught in the same theology department at Boston College for the entirety of her working life. The courses she taught, especially toward the end of her career and including advanced feminist ethics, cannot be straightforwardly understood as theological, however, but rather seem to be an accumulation of different disciplinary perspectives. Daly's working career, from 1967 to 1999, made her witness to enormous changes in the academy, and her position as a tenured academic after her successful struggle with the College over *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1968 would have given her some scope to incorporate the rather varied nature of her academic interests into her teaching. Just as, after the publication of *The Church and the Second Sex*, she began to reject academic theology as medium for her writing, so from this period she began to develop considerably less conventional approaches to her teaching of purportedly theological topics. This movement away from her earlier circumscription by theology can be read, as we saw in Chapter Two, as connected to institutional security (tenure) at the same time as her rejection *by* the theological establishment.

Both Butler and Daly offer us personal accounts of the changes they experienced between the publications of their first and second books. Daly's experiences of ostracism and extreme intellectual conservatism from her theological colleagues after her first book's publication caused her great disappointment, as she recounts, and finally a sense of disdain for the

opinions of supposedly great scholars.⁵ This is not an unambiguous refusal of the field in which she had invested so much energy, but a troubled and unhappy disjuncture between a previously accepted understanding of an intellectual and institutional context, and a new and disquieting experience within that context. What Daly had understood the academic theological field to be – open, intellectually rigorous, democratic – was brought into question through her messy, lived negotiations with its more dogmatic and conservative reality when she entered it as an intellectual producer. No longer recognising the theological field as a legitimate arena for the appraisal of her work, she nonetheless continued to participate in it: on the margins of theology, she clearly still contributed to that field through her intellectual output and teaching practice, at least at this stage in her career. In this way, we can understand Daly's later contention that, at the time of the 'Feminist Postchristian Introduction' to *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1975, she was both internal and external to the structures of institutionalised education. She understands herself as a marginal figure who is nonetheless still clearly a theologian and, in particular, her writing style as having 'effected a new kind of synthesis of legitimacy and illegitimacy. From a doctrinal/theological perspective I was Way Out, but I was within the range of rigorous reason'.⁶

Similarly, Butler can be considered to have emerged from a very traditional disciplinary position: as she recounts in her 'Can the "Other" of Philosophy Speak?', that of a relatively 'conservative' branch of continental philosophy, but from which comparatively circumscribed arena she began to develop a style more interdisciplinary in scope.⁷ The increasing connections between her work, beginning with the second book, *Gender Trouble*, and that

⁵ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, p. 13.

⁶ Mary Daly, *Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage. Containing Recollections from my 'Logbook of a Radical Feminist Philosopher' (Be-ing an Account of my Time/Space Travels and Ideas – Then, Again, Now and How)* (London: Women's Press, 1993), p. 190.

⁷ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 238.

being done in some areas of the literary studies field, led finally to her leaving an institutional home in philosophy altogether, and finding one in rhetoric and comparative literature. This move no more signifies an unambiguous movement out of philosophy than it does a simple shift into literary studies (Butler rarely writes on literature now), but rather suggests a move toward an ambiguous interdisciplinary space, a space in which she would increasingly understand herself to operate. As we saw in the discussion of the Bad Writing Prize in the previous chapter, literary studies is not in itself a 'less disciplined' or looser field than philosophy, and is by no means devoid of a conservative or protectionist pole; rather, it contains a substantial contingent of scholars who have been particularly receptive to the *interdisciplinary* innovations of post-structuralism. In 1999, Butler wrote that *Gender Trouble* 'seeks to affirm those positions on the critical boundaries of disciplinary life'.⁸ For both Daly and Butler, then, disciplinary centres provided a relatively secure position from which to begin a career; and it is, at least partially, career stability which provides the space for interdisciplinarity and the ambiguity of an intellectually 'liminal' speaking position.

Butler recounts her movement from a secure and clearly-delineated position in philosophy, including the publication of *Subjects of Desire*, to a more liminal and uncertain disciplinary place with the publication of *Gender Trouble*, in a rather different way from Daly. Rather than a series of academic and institutional experiences, Butler attributes her movement away from a secure disciplinary position to extra-academic considerations, in particular her engagement with feminist and lesbian politics 'outside those walls'.⁹ Perhaps surprisingly, what Butler seems to point toward in this narrative is a clear distinction between academic feminism and its real-world counterpart:

⁸Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. xxxii; see also her 'Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity', *Critical Inquiry*, 35.4 (2009), 773-95.

⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xvii.

institutional experiences as a source of disjuncture and thereby even consciousness-raising, like those which Daly identifies as instrumental in her intellectual formation, do not appear to figure in Butler's account of her decision to write a book which it is difficult to situate disciplinarily unless we understand women's studies as a disciplinary field.¹⁰ According to Butler, the academic system has not produced a disjuncture with a previous conceptualisation of the traditional discipline from which she emerges. And yet in 'Can the "Other" of Philosophy Speak?', we learn that it is through invitation to speak at literature departments that she develops the institutional affiliations with non-philosophical fields which will finally result in her leaving philosophy, at least institutionally, and joining comparative literature.¹¹ This is, then, a clear institutional reason for her movement out of philosophy and toward more disciplinarily loose institutional spaces.

For specific institutional reasons, then, both Butler and Daly come to understand themselves as marginal to the intellectual traditions from which they emerge. These changes, as we saw in the previous two chapters, do not simply emerge as a result of intellectual volition (although this is often how they are at least implicitly accounted for by both Daly and Butler), but rather develop through modifications of habitus and field. For instance, Butler's increasing sense that she wishes to write on gender in a field which, at least at the centre, does not consider this type of social application appropriate to the discipline (she later writes about the self-questioning of feminist philosophers, who continually wonder whether their philosophy is really philosophy), coupled with the institutional security of a permanent position within that very discipline, means that the possibility emerges for her to write *Gender*

¹⁰ Under the Library of Congress classification system, for instance, *Gender Trouble* is categorised as 'feminist theory' first, and is class-marked HQ ('family, marriage, sex and gender').

¹¹ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 243; see also her *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 271.

Trouble; and the publication of this book is, again, what allows her to make links to a potentially looser intellectual space (a particular sub-section of literary theory). Although much less a story of unambiguous institutional success, Daly's trajectory likewise involves modifications to both habitus and field. It was the existence of a burgeoning reformist sub-section of theology in the mid-1960s which allowed Daly to conceive of the feminist reforms of *The Church and the Second Sex*; and it was the disjuncture between this reformist intellectual habitus and the general conditions of the theological field which led to Daly no longer considering herself to be within that field. Both trajectories out from disciplinary circumscription and toward a broader intellectual function are conditioned by this continual interplay of field and habitus, and in particular by an increasing sense of incongruity between the two. In this case, it is useful to consider what intellectual and institutional options were available to them upon abandonment of their original fields: in the context of American academic structures, in particular, I want to reflect on the potential for women's studies to have provided a productive institutional and intellectual space for these feminists.

BUTLER AND DALY OUTSIDE WOMEN'S STUDIES

Daly and Butler for different reasons come to see their intellectual locations as outside of their original disciplines. Since both maintain a commitment to feminism in practice and in their intellectual production, and at least in Daly's case this is one of the reasons for abandonment of and exclusion from the primary field, we might expect that either or both would have found a home in women's studies. As significant feminist theorists working in the US, where women's studies has a far more substantial university presence than in

Europe, it might be logical to suppose that this was a viable option for both. And yet neither feminist entered women's studies as an institutional home: Daly stayed, rather contrarily, within theology, while Butler entered rhetoric and comparative literature which, as we saw in Chapter Three, can be an attractive home for those closer to the pole of the intellectual than the academic (for reasons which also make the traditional centre of the field particularly conservative). And as I will argue below, neither Daly nor Butler finds women's studies to be an *intellectual* home. By this I mean that there endures a particular set of *antagonisms* between Butler's and Daly's works and a certain conception of the women's studies field, which I will explore below.

Daly comes to understand at least the majority of academic feminists, and certainly scholars who understand their work as within the field of women's studies, as irrelevant and tokenistic game-players who have chosen not to engage seriously with the real message of feminism, which is to say radical feminism. In her later work, the idea of feminism as a scholarly pursuit is considered divorced from the realities of women's lives, a point which seems surprising given her commitment to the more metaphysical aspects of gender politics. Hers is a resistance, not to abstraction or theorisation in feminism generally, but to a specific brand of post-structuralism which, as she understands it, has robbed academic feminism of its political and even descriptive force. Given this new, institutionalised feminism, which insists that we replace the concept of 'women' with 'persons gendered as feminine', and creates an atmosphere in which theoretical one-upwomanship stymies genuine political debate, the pursuit of feminism in a specifically academic mode becomes untenable for her, and in fact unfeminist.¹²

¹² Mary Daly, *Quintessence... Realizing the Archaic Future: Containing Cosmic Comments and Conversations with the Author* (London: Women's Press, 1999), p. 134.

Daly's later works, although they certainly deal with *ideas*, feminist and otherwise, do not in any significant way constitute contributions to the women's studies field as we would generally understand it. Daly does not engage with contemporary women's studies debates, other than to make rather common-sensical claims about the silly abstractions of post-structuralist gender theory.¹³ She speaks, then, as if one outside of the 'academented' game of women's studies: she is a rather ironic and world-weary observer of these disciplinary struggles, situating herself in the Real World of Real Women and Real Feminism. My point is not necessarily that such a depiction is simplistic, but rather, or also, that in such a framing Daly constructs herself quite clearly outside of the endeavour of academic women's studies as she understands it. She may be an academic and a feminist, but she is not for all that one of *those* academic feminists.

In an opposite but similar manner, Butler consistently takes issue with a number of the common-places of women's studies: not only the construction of 'women' as a stable object of study, but more broadly than this the vestiges of essentialism and theories of patriarchy in academic feminism, which is to say radical feminism.¹⁴ Certainly Butler, like Daly, understands herself to be a feminist, writing for instance that *Gender Trouble* should be understood as 'part of feminism itself',¹⁵ yet she increasingly distances herself from the general project of women's studies. This distancing happens both through an explicit critique of the theoretical moves which need to take place to enable the establishment of such a project and, more simply, as we saw in Chapter Three,

¹³ Although not itself an attack on post-structuralist feminism, an extract from Daly's *Outercourse* was also chosen for inclusion in the edited collection *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed* which, as we saw in the previous chapter, saw one of its primary tasks as the debunking of 'post-modernism'. See Mary Daly, 'The Witches Return: Patriarchy on Trial' (1993), in *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, ed. by Diane Bell and Renate Klein, (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1996), pp. 551-56.

¹⁴ See, most obviously, *Gender Trouble*, but also 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"', in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3-21.

¹⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. vii.

through the moving away from gender regulation as a primary focus for her intellectual productions.

These rejections of women's studies do not only happen as a result of Butler's and Daly's intellectual choices, but are themselves, again, intimately tied up with field conditions. Like any other circumscribed disciplinary space, women's studies has a tendency to police its borders. Perhaps more so than more traditional disciplines, however, it is fraught with internal tensions concerning its own intellectual and political foundations, as well as attacks from outside its disciplinary borders, both from the right and the left.¹⁶ Women's studies practitioners are therefore often in the difficult position of attempting to maintain commitment to a critique of academic structures, whilst providing justification for the discipline's existence in institutionally conventional terms. This is one explanation that Wendy Brown gives for her controversial claim that women's studies is institutionally 'impossible'. Practitioners are forced to delimit their practice in terms of what is and is not legitimate women's studies in order to secure institutional recognition (not to say funding), and so finally buy into the very structures that they entered the academy to change:

Especially given the strange routes by which most faculty arrived at women's studies, and given the diverse materials we draw upon to vitalize our own research, who are we to police the intellectual boundaries of this endeavor? And how did we become cops anyway?¹⁷

Given these problems of institutional legitimation for women's studies, it is possible to understand Daly's and Butler's exclusions from this intellectual

¹⁶ Eloise Buker, however, argues that the internal debates, at least, are not unique to women's studies but can also be seen in the routine functioning of other, older disciplines. Political science is fraught with internal disagreements about the appropriateness of humanities and social science approaches to the subject matter, for instance, and for many individual political scientists there is no satisfactory answer to this and other methodological and foundational questions. See Eloise A. Buker, 'Is Women's Studies a Disciplinary or an Interdisciplinary Field of Enquiry?', *NWSA Journal*, 15.1 (2003), 73-93 (pp. 76-77).

¹⁷ Wendy Brown, 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies', *differences*, 9.3 (1997), 79-101 (p. 85).

space as processes of both self-legitimation and self-defence. In both Butler's and Daly's cases, we can understand their rejections of women's studies as connected not only to their own changing orientations to academic fields in general, but more specifically to how women's studies imagines itself as a field and polices those constructed borders. Irrespective of their very different academic and intellectual successes, both Butler and Daly provoke markedly strong and often negative responses from relatively large sections of the academic feminist community. They are in a sense taken to be paradigmatic of opposing trends in feminist theory, which can be made legible through Clare Hemmings's notion of progress and loss narratives in feminist historiography. Here, a progress narrative constructs the feminist trajectory as a movement away from the essentialism, white privilege, and simplistic binaries of the second wave, in particular the 1970s, which have been rightly superseded by an increasing theoretical sophistication and recognition of both the instability of identity and the intersectionality of oppression. Such a feminist narrative arguably bolsters some rather common-sensical and conservative conceptualisations of second-wave feminism and feminists: 'She is masculine, unattractive to men, prudish, humourless, and badly dressed: in short, she is a lesbian.'¹⁸ For such a 'common-sense gloss' of 'those' feminists,¹⁹ as well as for this common-sense construction of the feminist past in general, Daly can be considered paradigmatic. In Sigridur Gudmarsdottir's analysis of the links between essentialism, ecology, and the second wave, for instance, she takes Daly's work to be definitive; and in her review of *Quintessence*, Carol McAllister describes Daly as 'the quintessential radical feminist'.²⁰

¹⁸ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 8.

¹⁹ Clare Hemmings, 'Telling Feminist Stories', *Feminist Theory*, 6.2 (2005), 115-39 (p. 117).

²⁰ Sigridur Gudmarsdottir, 'Rapes of Earth and Grapes of Wrath: Steinbeck, Ecofeminism and the Metaphor of Rape', *Feminist Theology*, 18.2 (2010), 206-22 (pp. 215-20); Carol Ann McAllister, 'Review of Mary Daly, *Quintessence: Realizing the Archaic Feminist [sic.] Future*', *Library Journal*, 123.16 (1998), 121 (p. 121).

The converse but complementary story which Hemmings identifies is a narrative of loss. According to this tale about the feminist past, the movement experienced a golden period of political unity and commitment during the second wave, and since that time has declined to become abstract and fragmentary. Rather than unifying women, contemporary feminist theory, firstly, makes a virtue of the separation of women in endlessly proliferating social differences, and secondly, descends into such dense and self-indulgent theoretical abstraction that most women cannot understand it anyway.²¹ On both counts, Butler can be taken as emblematic of the decline: in her critique, Martha Nussbaum writes that she 'has shaped these developments more than any other [feminist]. Judith Butler seems to many young scholars to define what feminism is now'; while in a recent article, Lena Gunnarsson uses Butler's name as a shorthand for the feminist assault on the word 'women' ('In the theoretical landscape of queer-oriented feminists like Butler...'; 'Butler and her followers...'; 'Butler and others...').²² Although clearly complex phenomena with multiple possible causes, which Hemmings has traced, the emergence of these narratives of progress and loss, and the positions of Daly and Butler within them, should be placed in the context of women's studies' specific institutional tensions and difficulties: the production of feminist theory is not only a political practice connected to the movement but is most often also academic practice connected to disciplinary and institutional constraints.

When feminist critics place Daly in the context of a familiar feminist past (the radical 1970s) rather than acknowledging her continuing contributions to feminist knowledge into the 2000s, they police a specific conception of the state of the *contemporary* field. Such a conception relies on institutionally conventional notions of the progressive advance of knowledge:

²¹ Hemmings, 'Telling Feminist Stories', pp. 123-25.

²² Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler', *New Republic*, 220.8 (1999), 37-45 (p. 38); Lena Gunnarsson, 'A Defence of the Category "Women"', *Feminist Theory*, 12.23 (2011), 23-37 (pp. 29; 30).

as in Jakobsen's phrase in the epigraph, this is 'the progress narrative in which women's studies is always proceeding toward a future in which all will come right in the end'.²³ Similarly, when *Gender Trouble*'s critiques of 'women' as a foundation for feminist theoretical discourse are treated as external to women's studies, this externalisation regulates what should and should not be considered correct practice for the discipline. Labels such as 'post-feminist' continue this externalisation: both feminism as politics and women's studies as academic practice are neatened up so as to exclude any messy fringes.²⁴ By concentrating on (and externalising) specific feminists considered paradigmatic of a trend, the women's studies field polices its own borders and regulates its practitioners. These field conditions, working alongside Daly's and Butler's own senses of academic and intellectual opportunity and constraint, make it difficult for women's studies to become a home for them.

Thinking about Butler's and Daly's framings in feminist narratives alongside their relationships to the disciplines in which they have participated, we might see that, despite their obvious differences, Daly and Butler are in fact similar in crucial ways. Unlike many feminists they take their distances, not just from traditional disciplines, but from women's studies as an academic pursuit as well. What appears to be happening in both movements away from traditional disciplines but *not* toward women's studies as a field for intellectual production, is a (very different in each case) movement away from the academic function, and toward the intellectual one. Butler increasingly moves toward the intellectual pole, toward interdisciplinarity and disciplinary liminality as the ideal mode for intellectual work:

²³ Jakobsen, 'Different Differences', p. 128.

²⁴ For a recent continuation of this commentary on 'post-feminism', which insists on the externalisation of new feminisms as not-really feminism, see Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009). For an interesting counter, see Catherine Redfern and Kristin Aune, *Reclaiming the F Word: The New Feminist Movement* (London: Zed, 2010).

this rich region that the institutional foreclosures of the philosophic have produced: such good company and better wine, and so many more unexpected conversations across disciplines, such extraordinary movements of thought that surpass the barriers of departmentalization, posing a vital problem for those who remain behind.²⁵

This move is simultaneously a move away from the disciplinary specificity of women's studies itself. Butler becomes, not something like a feminist intellectual, but something like a general intellectual, offering critical analyses of an extremely broad array of cultural and political phenomena. For Butler, this movement appears to be successful, albeit ambivalently: despite the often vitriolic assessments of her academic rigour in particular *disciplinary* fields, she is asked to speak and write widely and publicly on a broad range of issues (she has recently been engaged with the Occupy movement, for instance, speaking at Occupy Wall Street and becoming involved in the Occupy Writers initiative, and has been a measured but vocal supporter of the Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions movement against the Israeli government), and she can be considered a relatively well-known intellectual presence outside of the academy.²⁶ More broadly than this, her recent intellectual interventions have tended to address international political concerns such as the invasion of Iraq and detention of terror suspects without trial, which are likely to attract a broad, non-specialist audience.

Conversely but similarly, Daly moves away from a tightly circumscribed disciplinary home, but cannot find a new one in women's studies. The academic pursuit of feminism becomes for Daly a hopeless distraction designed to institutionalise and so constrict the free and organic

²⁵ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 250.

²⁶ See, for instance the speeches 'Bodies in Public', in *Occupy! Scenes from Occupied America*, ed. by Astra Taylor *et al.* (New York: Verso, 2011), pp. 192-93; and 'Remarks to Brooklyn College on BDS', *The Nation*, 7 February 2013 <<http://www.thenation.com/article/172752/judith-butlers-remarks-brooklyn-college-bds>> [accessed 2 March 2013].

movement of women. Her later works seek to speak more broadly to the women's movement than those which are disciplinarily contained, but, as many feminist critics point out, this is a strange kind of intellectual production: one which appears not to try to reach an audience that does not already recognise itself in a very specific form of radical metaphysical separatism. Like Butler, Daly moves out from a tightly circumscribed disciplinary centre, and eventually to a space outside of both theology and women's studies. Rather than as a contributor to the academic feminist body of knowledge, Daly comes to see herself as critic of that field from without, and makes a sharp distinction between *academia*, as a restrictive space in which to create dogmatic, unimaginative, formalised knowledge, and the authentic intellectual life. The latter, with its existential commitment to 'Be-ing', that is, living creatively and spontaneously in something like a parallel intellectual and spiritual world, involves creating feminist community with other women, and especially those who are not academics.

This understanding of Butler's and Daly's movements toward less disciplinarily-circumscribed and more intellectually 'free' work raises a number of questions about the idea of the intellectual in society, and how feminists specifically can come to understand themselves within its terms. If Butler develops an *intellectual* line, as I am understanding it here, she does so partially through a movement away from feminism as a specific politics to animate her work. This is not the argument that post-structuralist gender theory such as we find in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter* is 'not really' feminism, but that her *later* work moves away from this concentration on gender in order to focus on what we might think of as 'broader' political issues. Conversely, when Daly moves away from disciplinary circumscription, she develops a conception of herself as a specifically *feminist* commentator: she seeks to connect herself to (her particular brand of) feminism as social

movement, and to be an intellectual voice in service of that community. If these are both moves toward something like the intellectual function, they are nonetheless notably different from each other: for Butler, the move is toward an increasing scholarly generality, while for Daly, it entails an increasing specification and tightening of an intellectual system.

Although this fairly stark difference between Butler and Daly cannot fully account for their relative successes as intellectuals, it does point to a set of questions about the relation between feminism and the intellectual function. Has the role of the intellectual historically been, and is it now, fundamentally connected to the ideal of free-floating and non-partisan commentary; that is, is there a tension between the *specificity* of feminist intellectual work and some idea of *generality* contained within the notion of the intellectual? What is the relation between local, particular concerns and international ones, and is there a hierarchy between them? And if twentieth-century theories of intellectuals have been enmeshed with Marxism, and with the notion of an intellectual vanguard in service of the workers, what happens to the conception of the intellectual when its constituency is different? Through comparison with theories of intellectuals in which feminist politics are not considered, and an examination of the ways in which women's studies as discipline might be said to show these tensions in stark relief, I will argue finally that women's studies holds the potential to be a dialectical *living out* (rather than a reconciliation) of this series of tensions. Had women's studies itself been open to its own promise, and had Butler and Daly been able to remain attached to such tensions of the intellectual function rather than seeking to resolve them, women's studies may in fact have become a logical intellectual home for both.

INTELLECTUALS AND ACADEMICS

When Daly and Butler begin to distance themselves from the disciplines and to understand their work as intellectually broader, in audience or theme, than that which they had produced before, they implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) endorse a long-established separation of intellectuals from academics. In this section, I will connect these feminists' movements to a broader series of debates around the idea of the intellectual, and finally to the potential of women's studies as a way of thinking through the relations between the intellectual and the academic more constructively.

In a rather sardonic reflection, Steve Fuller perhaps conveys a fairly common understanding of the distinction between academics and intellectuals; not least one which might be received warmly by those who would like to consider themselves intellectuals first:

To the naïve observer, intellectuals and academics look very much alike. Both talk a lot, gesture wildly and wear bad clothes. The big difference, however, is that intellectuals actually care about ideas and know how to deal with them effectively.²⁷

Indeed a large proportion of the book from which the quote is taken, *The Sociology of Intellectual Life*, is a stirring argument for the function of the intellectual as a daring, over-confident, and not particularly meticulous 'bullshitter': a person truly committed to the ideal of public engagement, including on topics at some remove from the specifics of one's technical or scholarly competence.²⁸ This particular understanding of the role of the intellectual certainly has a history, and Fuller's deliberately controversial valorisation of a kind of eloquent and educated ignorance takes its terms from the well-rehearsed complaint that the intellectual knows not of which she

²⁷ Steve Fuller, *The Sociology of Intellectual Life: The Career of the Mind in and around the Academy* (London: Sage, 2009), p 84; see also his *The Intellectual* (Cambridge: Icon, 2005).

²⁸ Richard Dawkins is the paradigmatic case.

speaks, and its distance from the defence of the intellectual as a character with some kind of 'general' competence. In Fuller's re-drawing of this debate, the intellectual does indeed often speak outside her sphere of competence, and this is precisely the value of those academics whose hubris leads them to have an opinion and to wish to communicate it to people other than their colleagues. This is not a sign of cerebral weakness but the true promise of the intellectual, whose powers of persuasion and rhetoric should be harnessed to paper over an otherwise irreducible gap: that between the complexity of social and political reality, and necessarily limited human ways of knowing. Understanding this problem better than most, through the lacunae which constantly emerge in their own research attempts, *academics* fester in its irreducibility; while the intellectual chooses to offer more or less audacious, probably incorrect but always interesting solutions.

Fuller's reading is pleasantly contrary to received wisdom – the work of an intellectual in action, perhaps – and certainly offers an intriguing way into thinking about the social function of intellectuals. Nonetheless, what might be missing from the account is an attempt to engage with the *sociological* specifics of the distinction between academics and intellectuals: that is, why it is that some academics remain academics, yet others are willing or able to rise to the position of intellectuals. Further, Fuller's formulation does not help us understand why some intellectual interventions appear to be more successful than others: some intellectuals are clearly received in most quarters as fundamentally informed and thoughtful commentators – rightly or wrongly, they are not perceived to be 'bullshitting' – while others are considered with scepticism if not downright hostility. As has been argued in the previous chapters, Daly and Butler do not move away from self-conceptions connected to the academic function through intellectual volition alone, but through a series of sociologically legible processes of exclusion,

legitimation, and de-legitimation; and what we might think of as their intellectual or extra-academic interventions are received quite differently from each other as well as differently in different fields.

This lack of attention to sociological explanation – despite Fuller’s title, *The Sociology of Intellectual Life* – may, in fact, have something to do with the history of thought on intellectuals in general. This history is notable for its polemical rather than reflective character, which emerges for a number of reasons. If an academic is interested in the distinction between intellectuals and academics, she will no doubt have spent some time contemplating her own relation to that question (that is, whether or not she wishes to consider herself an intellectual), and so she may already have a personal investment in one or other of the terms. Those who thereby take an opposed view either to the idea of intellectuals in general or to particular intellectuals, often see that group as a somewhat nefarious one very closely linked to their own, and from which they would wish to distance themselves. Similarly, those who do identify as intellectuals, in their reflections on the matter, often wish to construct a defence. In this instance, then, academics and intellectuals are obliged to think about *themselves* and their milieu, and so elements of defensiveness and accusation may be more likely to emerge than they would be in other discussions. In that case, theories of intellectuals are often permeated with both personal investments and a sense that the discussion is too urgent for critically distanced reflection, and will tend to take on a polemical rather than a sociological character. As has been shown throughout this thesis, however, a more sociological account of the differences between intellectuals and academics, and the specific work which they do, as seen through specific case studies, can show us a considerable amount. Turning now to some of these polemical accounts of the role of the intellectual, we might see how women’s studies as a discipline as well as Butler’s and Daly’s

own institutional and intellectual experiences illuminate or modify those theories.

Since classic theories of intellectuals have often been either tied to some form of Marxism or otherwise stated in opposition to that tradition, one of the problems that is consistently worked through in those theories is that of the relation between the intellectuals and the workers. The intellectuals work in the Marxist tradition as a bloc of politically committed intellectual *activists*, developing a line of informed critique of capitalism. However, since there remains a tension here – intellectuals have not only biographically benefitted from their class and educational privileges, made possible through oppressive economic and social structures, but also continue to do so in as much as they maintain a relatively privileged economic and social status – the specific relation of this group to the workers requires theorising. Outside of specifically Marxist considerations, many other theorists of intellectuals maintain that the crucial distinction between academics and intellectuals is something like political commitment: intellectuals develop a line of social and political critique and attempt to communicate that politics more broadly than simply within the academy. The relation of the workers to the intellectuals is thus both crucial to the history of thought on intellectuals and also a key problem when it comes to thinking through the idea of the *feminist* intellectual: in this last case it is the relationship of such intellectuals to *women* which is potentially at issue, a group to which they generally already belong. This both alleviates some of the tensions within classic theories of intellectuals and creates new problems for a theory of the feminist intellectual.

In this tradition of radical thought on intellectuals, we might talk of a general opposition between intellectuals as necessarily subservient to the movement, and vanguardism. While for Jean-Paul Sartre, as we will see in greater detail below, intellectuals constitute a discrete group and have a

particular series of functions, they certainly should not dictate a programme or take charge of organisation. He thus departs from both Lenin and Gramsci, in as much as those thinkers insist on the specific power of the intellectual as both organisational and ideological director. For Lenin, the suggestion that the 'revolutionaries' (those who are intellectually Marxist, for instance students) simply follow the popular movement (which tends toward both reformism and protectionist unionism) is deeply regressive. Lenin calls for a small class of professional revolutionaries to create an organisational and intellectual vanguard, which he claims as the only solution to the amateurism which plagues the movement:

Circles of 'amateurs' are not, of course, capable of coping with political tasks so long as they have not become aware of their amateurism and do not abandon it. If, moreover, these amateurs are enamoured of their primitive methods, and insist on writing the word 'practical' in italics, and imagine that being practical demands that one's tasks be reduced to the level of understanding of the most backward strata of the masses, then they are hopeless amateurs and, of course, certainly cannot *in general cope with any political tasks*.²⁹

Nonetheless, unlike Sartre Lenin does not insist on the sociological specifics of the intellectual, that is on the class differences which antagonise strategic and ideological differences between the intellectuals and the workers. Rather for Lenin, as for Gramsci, the spaces from which intellectuals might emerge are considerably more open: some workers, for instance, display a natural aptitude for propaganda or organisation, and as such the movement ought to provide for them to become professional revolutionaries.

²⁹ V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, ed. by Robert Service, trans. by Joe Fineberg and George Hanna (London: Penguin, 1988), pp. 168-69 (original emphasis).

These issues of representation, crucial as they are for Marxist and other radical understandings of intellectuals, begin to change when we think about the idea of feminist intellectual work, since most feminists are women seeking to represent women. Although there are certainly well-documented struggles connected to class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality within the feminist intellectual tradition, nonetheless it does not contain the *elementary* tension of the Marxist vanguard: that of a group of representatives at significant and fundamental social remove from those they seek to represent. In this sense, the notion of the feminist intellectual relieves or lessens one tension at the centre of theories of intellectuals: that of representation. Nonetheless, there remain tensions at the centre of both general theories of the intellectual and the notion of the women's studies scholar which might help us understand Daly's and Butler's misgivings about taking up the latter role. Through a reading of Jean-Paul Sartre's 'Plea for Intellectuals', we will begin to see some of the connections between women's studies as discipline and the idea of the intellectual in general, and how these connections help explain both Butler's and Daly's unhappiness with the role of the women's studies scholar, and the potential of women's studies as intellectual space. Whilst clearly Sartre is addressing himself very specifically to the relation between the socialist intellectual and the workers in this article, I argue that his theorisation of the *dialectical tension* at the heart of that figure can be applied in productive ways to the women's studies scholar.

In his paper 'A Plea for Intellectuals', Sartre argues for a self-understanding which acknowledges the fundamental dialectic at the heart of intellectuals' consciousness. Rather than try to resolve the paradoxes which invariably create tension and unease in the mind of the *true* intellectual, Sartre argues that such contradictions must be lived out as the unhappy marker of the genuine intellectual life: 'antagonisms may diminish, but

perpetual contradictions and dissensions are the lot of the social group we call intellectuals.’³⁰ The central paradox is that between some form of universalist, humanist egalitarianism inculcated through higher education, and the contingent experience of personal privilege. Irrespective of knowledge about the far-from-universal nature of the advantages (whether monetary, social, or simply educational) which have allowed the intellectual to rise, she is generally loathe to give them up. This problem is not to be reconciled, for instance through justifications of the privilege, or bad faith about the extent to which such privilege has been advantageous, but rather is the very site for dialectical consciousness which allows the intellectual to have some limited understanding of the workers’ condition. Like the workers, and unlike the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals experience a contradiction between the universal impulse of their ideology and the particularism of self-preservation. Constantly in tension about the problem (unlike the false intellectual, who ignores the contradiction in favour of an imagined, unproblematic relation to the bourgeois interests she serves), the true intellectual thus seeks some relief by speaking out about the workers’ condition and her own, and trying to reveal the contradictions at the heart of her own relations to bourgeois ideology:

if he has to call in question the ideology that formed him to escape malaise and mutilation; if he refuses to be a subaltern agent of bourgeois hegemony and to act as the means towards ends which he is forbidden to know or to dispute – then the agent of practical knowledge becomes a monster, that is to say an intellectual; *someone who attends to what concerns him* (in exteriority – the principles which guide the conduct of his life; and in interiority – his

³⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. by John Matthews (London: NLB, 1974), p. 263. Sartre depicts the true in contradistinction to the false intellectual, who sublimates the difficulties arising from the contradictions of her role and pretends instead to have an uncomplicated and direct relation to the bourgeoisie: ‘Let us say that certain subaltern functionaries of the superstructure feel that their interests are tied to those of the dominant class – which is true – and refuse to feel anything else – which is to suppress the opposite sentiment, that is also true’ (p. 252).

lived experience in society) and whom others refer to [as] a man *who interferes in what does not concern him*.³¹

Sartre's understanding of the intellectuals does not seek to *reconcile* the contradictions they face (as in the 'false' intellectual's strategy), but rather to hold them together in dialectic. It is precisely through these unreconciled antagonisms, between self-interest and egalitarianism, and bourgeois and humanitarian allegiances, that the intellectual takes up their role. Such an understanding rejects the straightforward juxtaposition of contradictory elements, and concomitant insistence that individuals must choose between them or be reduced to absurdity, which characterises a non-dialectical approach to the world. In Allan Bloom's controversial account of the role of the American humanities professor in the educational upheavals following 1968, for instance, he notes similar contradictions in consciousness to those Sartre had noted in 1965:

The justice in which they believe is egalitarian, and they are the agents of the rare, the refined and the superior. By definition they are out of it, and their democratic inclinations and guilt push them to be with it.³²

However, for Bloom such contradictions can be straightforwardly attributed to a regrettable *confusion* about the role of the humanities, and the professors' wrong-headed attempts to deal with it. The contradiction can in fact be fixed by simply rejecting one side of it: humanities scholars and teachers should remain the protectors of the great traditions in culture, and in general reject challenges to that heritage even if they are personally sympathetic to other

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244 (original emphases).

³² Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 353. In a more recent book from a similarly conservative stance, Alan Kahan argues that '[b]ecause intellectuals are an accidental aristocracy, created and reproduced by a democratic society, their social and psychological situation is particularly complicated'. See Alan S. Kahan, *Mind vs Money: The War between Intellectuals and Capitalism* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2010), p. 13.

democratic innovations. Such an uncomplicated resolution of the contradictions Bloom and Sartre note seems unlikely to resolve the actual psychic and social antagonisms which have given rise to them. By contrast, as we will see in relation to similar tensions and contradictions within the discipline of women's studies, it is by inhabiting the paradoxes themselves, as Sartre argues, that something fruitful can be made of them.

The idea that the contradiction between universalism and particularism which accompanies a relatively dominated social position can be a source of increased consciousness has been utilised in some areas of feminist theory and methodology, notably standpoint theory. Sandra Harding, for instance, argues in the context of philosophy of science that a subordinate social position leads to an ability to grasp both dominant or 'universal' perspectives and the apparently more partial understandings of the dominated; while Joan Scott discusses the terms of the contradiction in the context of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century appeals to both universal principles and specifically gendered exclusions in her *Only Paradoxes to Offer*.³³ In such accounts, feminists point to the tensions at the heart of feminist politics, especially in terms of representation and intellectual work, not as problems to be solved but as *animating* tensions. As we will see when we look in more detail at women's studies as discipline, it is this dialectical understanding of such paradoxes which feminists might turn toward in their grapplings with the notion of the feminist intellectual.

The *specific* paradoxes which Sartre identifies for the intellectual are context-specific and may not be generalisable – feminist intellectuals, for instance, do not in general present problems of representation in the same way as socialist intellectuals, as we have seen. Nonetheless, what remains a

³³ Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986); Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

useful way to theorise the role of the intellectual is dialectical tension *itself*. Feminist intellectuals have sought to negotiate a series of tensions which inhere in their intellectual practice: that between women's studies as a disciplinarily circumscribed and academically 'legitimate' field, and commitment to interdisciplinarity, public engagement, and service to a broader movement, for instance. While a number of feminists have sought to *reconcile* these split commitments and antagonistic elements, there have also been attempts to inhabit the paradoxes as what animate the discipline. In this more dialectical approach, women's studies is understood as a dynamic site of struggle and exchange rather than as a static problem to be solved. When Daly and Butler reject (and indeed are rejected by) women's studies as a disciplinary and disciplining field, what is maintained is the latter conception of the project at the expense of the former.

TENSIONS IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

The series of antagonisms, tensions, and contradictions at the centre of women's studies have been a source of much debate for its practitioners and denouncement for its critics. The discipline originated in America (in the early 1970s) in close connection to the feminist movement, in many places as an extension of consciousness-raising and public education initiatives associated with radical feminism.³⁴ This historical origin has meant that women's studies practitioners have tried to maintain their relation to a specific political impetus, even whilst the desire for greater recognition has tended to necessitate the justification of its practices in purely academic terms, and

³⁴ Christine V. Wood, 'Knowledge Practices, Institutional Strategies, and External Influence in the Making of an Interdisciplinary Field: Insights from the Case of Women's and Gender Studies', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 20.10 (2012), 1-25 (p. 6).

sometimes as even against that political heritage. Wendy Brown wonders rhetorically how these two apparently contradictory elements came together in the space of women's studies, but in fact their concurrence is foundational to the discipline.³⁵ Both the academic function, understood as intellectual production concerned with a *specific* disciplinary rigour, and the intellectual one, understood as intellectual production concerned with broad political considerations and a wider public, are held in tension in the figure of the women's studies practitioner. Here we do not find a reconciliation of such paradoxes, but rather a *living out* of them. In this sense, women's studies is a fruitful site for the development of the intellectual function, and had it proved possible for them, may have provided a particularly productive home for both Daly and Butler, given their desires to speak to a broader public.

This tension relating to the political impetus for women's studies might also be connected to the question of the *purpose* of the discipline. In many fields, we might expect the answer to this problem to be somewhat self-evident: the purpose of the discipline is the dissemination, expansion, and critique of knowledge and knowledge-gathering practices, around broadly agreed-upon points of intellectual interest. For women's studies, however, there is again a tension here. For many of the original instigators of the field, women's studies was designed to be a necessary but transitional step on the path to full absorption of the study of women *within* the pre-existing disciplines. According to such an approach (which Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein term 'integrationist'), women's studies' role is not to demarcate a new, autonomous field of academia, but rather to further the study of women in the academy more broadly. Initially, this will necessitate the production of specifically feminist academic space, but such a move should be seen as transitory. Clearly, such an interpretation of women's studies' purpose is in

³⁵ Brown, 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies', p. 85.

tension with that which argues for its autonomous worth as a discipline which identifies new objects of research and develops innovative research methodologies.³⁶ However, while Bowles and Klein identify these two approaches – integrationist and autonomous – as discrete orientations to the discipline, in reality they are likely to exist, in tension, within the consciousness of many women's studies practitioners. Certainly, it seems unlikely that many who insist on the autonomy and disciplinary circumscription of women's studies do not also look to a time when feminist insights are accepted in earnest in the rest of the academy.

Tensions such as these are not peripheral but rather central to the functioning of women's studies, and this is not only for intellectual but also institutional reasons. In the early 1990s, Lisa Adkins and Diana Leonard reported some tentative optimism about the future of women's studies in the then-contemporary UK political and intellectual climate. This seems surprising given the politics of that era, but the authors point to a series of rather cynical explanations for it. Women's studies as an undergraduate subsidiary course as well as a discipline for postgraduates was popular and, crucially, cheap. Requiring no expensive laboratories or research facilities and, due to its relative newness, tending to employ cheap early-career academics who would take on considerably more teaching than their more experienced (and costly) colleagues, women's studies and other new, politically motivated disciplines, irrespective of the genuine commitment of their instigators, tended to suit administrative desires for low-cost, 'consumer'-driven teaching.³⁷

³⁶ Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein, 'Introduction: Theories of Women's Studies and the Autonomy/Integration Debate', in *Theories of Women's Studies*, ed. by Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 1-26 (pp. 2-5).

³⁷ Lisa Adkins and Diana Leonard, 'From Academia to the Education Marketplace: United Kingdom Women's Studies in the 1990s', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 20.3/4 (1992), 28-37 (p. 32).

Such a paradoxical relationship between university administration and the politically-committed labour force – holding vastly differing conceptions of the value of higher education, but nonetheless coming to similar conclusions about the value of women’s studies as an endeavour – is complicated by what has been variously conceptualised as the ‘double-shift’ or ‘public sector’ nature of academic feminist labour. According to this understanding, in addition to the more quotidian responsibilities assigned to academics, feminists and other politically-committed scholars perform supplementary emotional and political labour. Lisa Disch and Jean O’Brien cite, for example, a greater commitment to and involvement with individual students (not least because professional hierarchies and distancing strategies are often systematically problematised in the feminist classroom); a greater willingness on women’s studies scholars’ part to sit on committees, particularly those concerned with equal opportunities, or on which they will be the expert in equal opportunities, and a concomitant expectation from superiors that they will perform such functions; and a general, sincere commitment to certain ideals of education – all these elements contribute to an institutional and self-understanding of feminists as committed emotional labourers. Disch and O’Brien form an analogy between feminists in higher education and public sector workers in state mechanisms: like nurses, the politically-committed labour force is considered essential to the workings of the institutional machine, and is nominally respected by it, yet much of its work is understood to be supplementary and thereby not necessitating remuneration. Indeed, just as some of the nurse’s work is revered precisely *because* it is emotional, ‘feminised’, and consequently low-waged – the idea that such additional emotional work should be remunerated is even considered a vulgar monetisation of what is often coded as a specifically female *virtue* – so the politically-committed academic labour force, in this

reading, is respected and desired by institutional administrations, partially at the expense of compensation for that work. Further, Disch and O'Brien contend that feminist academics in fact feed into this 'emotional over-time' mentality whenever they embrace the notion that certain aspects of their work are above and beyond their wage-labour and instead connected to some purportedly *separate* political commitment. Such a division bolsters both the exploitative ethic of the institutional system and their own professional privilege, in so far as they are comfortable enough to distance themselves from wage-labour. Rather, feminist academics should not divide their time into core and marginal labour, however conceived, but instead should accept the contradictions and difficulties which are the reality of their occupation.³⁸

By insisting that feminist academics must not propagate the purported separation of politically-committed from scholarly labour, then, Disch and O'Brien appear to look to a blurring of the boundaries between the intellectual and the academic, albeit in somewhat different terminology. While feminist academics, on this reading, have sometimes been content to embrace the 'double-shift' characterisation of their political and emotional work, that is the separation of such labour from their properly scholastic (and remunerated) function, there nonetheless remains a tension at play between the two which is relatively new, and is not the same as that identified by classical theorists of intellectuals. For academics within the disciplinary remit of women's studies, political critique is *not* simply an intellectual pursuit which one may or may not take up in addition to academic work, to varying degrees of admiration and consternation from colleagues, but is implied in the very nature of the scholarly work and the expectations of peers. In this new context, it becomes

³⁸ Lisa J. Disch and Jean M. O'Brien, 'Innovation is Overtime: An Ethical Analysis of "Politically Committed" Academic Labor', in *Feminist Waves, Feminist Generations: Life Stories from the Academy*, ed. by Hokulani K. Aikau, Karla A. Erickson, and Jennifer L. Pierce (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 140-67. The concept of 'emotional labour' was first articulated by Arlie Hochschild; see her *Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

difficult to discern precisely where the academic function ends and the intellectual one begins.

It is hard to see how tensions such as those between the intellectual and academic functions can ever be reconciled completely, given the specific institutional and political history which marks women's studies' difference from traditional disciplines. Since Daly and Butler themselves both come to struggle with tensions such as these – between inculcated desire for specifically disciplinary recognition and a wish to produce more broadly useful intellectual work, however conceived, for instance – I will argue finally that the contradictory space of women's studies is a particularly fruitful location for feminist intellectual production such as theirs. But neither institutionally nor intellectually did these feminists find a home in women's studies, for the reasons outlined above. Instead, they produced intellectual work which eschewed, often sardonically, the academic function altogether.

CONCLUSION

Arguably, when Butler and Daly, despite their feminist commitments, do not come to understand their work as within the field of women's studies, as when women's studies practitioners themselves externalise Butler's and Daly's intellectual productions, what is sought is a reconciliation of the kind of dialectical tensions – in particular that between the intellectual and the academic – which I am tracing here. It is indeed extremely difficult to work within the restrictions of a discipline which simultaneously asks for political commitment, public engagement, and broad interdisciplinary knowledge. By insisting on and policing clearly defined boundaries for women's studies, some practitioners refuse the messy, political history of this strange and

contradictory field; just as, by denouncing the restrictions and constraints of disciplinary modes of thought, including women's studies, Butler and Daly miss what is enabling as well as infuriating about an institutionally recognised home for sustained feminist work.

For a number of feminists it is, instead, possible to *inhabit* the tensions of women's studies: less certainly, and more productively. Janet Jakobsen argues that attempts to manage the contradictions of women's studies through some strategic gloss – such as 'alliance' or 'difference' – which acknowledges the difficulties but brackets them off for some future moment when we will have the time to think them through properly, forecloses opportunities for frank consideration of our successes and failures.³⁹ And Robyn Wiegman has recently argued for a new relation to the objects of women's studies: one in which we do not ask them to do all of the work that needs doing, all of the time. She traces the emergence of gender studies as an alternative figuration of women's studies, including Butler's own commitment in *Gender Trouble* to the destabilisation of the foundational word, 'women'. For Wiegman, this move toward gender is symptomatic of a not only intellectual but also emotional over-investment in what words should achieve for us. Indeed, 'women' is not an exhaustive and unproblematic term: it is asking too much to expect it to be so. This is what she terms 'categorical essentialism': the desire that our categories and the social world should correspond exhaustively, and that if they do not, it is the category which is wrong rather than the desire.⁴⁰ And because of its insistence on the non-exhaustive (and therefore incorrect) nature of the category 'women', the move toward gender in fact forgets the history of feminism and the creative, strategic, playful, and political uses to which the word has been put, including by those who have been excluded by

³⁹ Jakobsen, 'Different Differences', p. 127.

⁴⁰ Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (London: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 63.

everyday uses of it.⁴¹ When a transgender woman refers to herself as a woman, she is often not insisting on some exhaustive, ahistorical, or naturalistic definition of the term, but is *putting it to use* for a personal but often also political purpose.

The move toward gender is an attempt to resolve one of the fundamental problematics of feminism: the non-necessity of the category 'women' and its very real effects. But this is not the only way in which the tensions and difficulties which animate women's studies are often not inhabited but are rather (purportedly) allayed. From a very different political perspective, Daly also tries to make the complex reality of feminism and her own desire for it coincide. Just as Butler's contributions to the emergence of gender studies and theory arguably attempt to purify feminism of problematic elements and so seek to reconcile the politics with a neater, cleaner object (gender), so Daly insists on a specific conception of radical feminism as synonymous with feminism itself. This is a repudiation of the contradictory conditions of the politics and its theory. I might not be too happy to see a Conservative MP in a 'This is what a feminist looks like' t-shirt, but in this case I need to make a case for the kind of feminism I *do* want, not a claim that the term belongs to me and my friends and is used incorrectly by Theresa May. By moving away from disciplinary circumscription altogether, including that of women's studies, both Butler and Daly try to reconcile a number of the contradictions of politically committed academic work discussed above, not least that between the intellectual and the academic functions. This is not to say that they could or should have overcome the institutional and social conditions within which they have had to negotiate an intellectual path, in order to get to this 'correct' understanding of feminist academic labour. Rather, I intend such a reading to offer a potentially more fruitful way of

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-65.

negotiating such conditions than those which were available to Daly and Butler.

Neither Daly nor Butler was able to take up the challenge of women's studies, which is the challenge of producing both intellectual and academic work on gender at once. Aspiring to be a properly disciplinary pursuit with a series of agreed-upon premises, and simultaneously a politically committed and emancipatory intellectual enterprise, women's studies inhabits a difficult and liminal space in the university and in the consciousness of many feminists. Nonetheless, it is this capacity to destabilise sharp distinctions between the functions that might give new disciplines such as women's studies their force. Women's studies is a space in which relatively radical ideas are not only tolerated, as in a discipline such as literary studies, but in fact comprise a fair proportion of the work which is carried out in general. Irrespective of the many disagreements between women's studies scholars on any number of issues, the notion of political commitment is inscribed in the very definition of an academic in that specific discipline. Such a conception of the field allows feminists to hold the intellectual and academic functions in dialectical tension, in potentially very productive ways.

As Lisa Adkins and Diana Leonard have argued, this position in a marginalised, under-funded, and institutionally and politically maligned field is not necessarily always easy to maintain, but this in itself is not a reason to retain a secure position in a traditional discipline whilst dipping in and out of feminist scholarship 'like knitting', that is, as an optional academic hobby.⁴² Rather, it is the task of feminist scholars *not* to attempt to reconcile the series of problematic paradoxes at the heart of women's studies, but to inhabit them instead. Thus, to criticise from without and maintain a position outside of women's studies, as Daly does, is no less constructive than to develop an

⁴² Adkins and Leonard, 'From Academia to the Education Marketplace', p. 33.

intellectual line which understands itself to be beyond disciplinary considerations broadly conceived, as Butler does. Both moves imagine the paradoxical relation between the academic and intellectual functions in women's studies to require a resolution, that is for us to decide whether what we have to say is pertinent to a specific, circumscribed, and rigorous field of academic endeavour (understood sardonically or not), or otherwise a point of politically committed and engaged intellectual work. The uneasy marriage of these two functions and of other apparent binaries held in tension at the heart of women's studies is in fact what produces it as, in Robyn Wiegman's phrase, 'a project of possibility'.⁴³

⁴³ Robyn Wiegman, 'Introduction: On Location', in *Women's Studies on its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*, ed. by Robyn Wiegman (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 1-44 (p. 2).

Conclusion

[W]ith students and the research community, in every operation we pursue together (a reading, an interpretation, the construction of a theoretical model, the rhetoric of an argumentation, the treatment of historical material, and even of mathematical formalization), we argue or acknowledge that an institutional context is at play, a type of contract signed, an image of the ideal seminar constructed, a socius implied, repeated or displaced, invented, transformed, menaced or destroyed. An institution – this is not merely a few walls or some outer structures surrounding, protecting, guaranteeing or restricting the freedom of our work; it is also and already the structure of our interpretation.

Jacques Derrida¹

Towards the end of the previous chapter, I argued that women's studies as discipline has the capacity to foster a potentially very productive conceptualisation of academic work. This is because it contains within itself a series of tensions which appear to be very difficult to reconcile. The field aspires toward institutional recognition for the inherent intellectual value and rigour of its work, and simultaneously offers systematic critiques of both the institutionalisation and formalisation of knowledge, and the very necessity for a new discipline to take half of humanity into account. Such tensions should not be understood, I argue, simply as blocks to the development of a workable feminist project within the academy, but rather as signposts to a new way of thinking about that project itself. Women's studies is problematic for the academy not because it is somehow *not* a discipline but because, by behaving differently from other fields of intellectual enquiry, it has the potential to

¹ Jacques Derrida, 'Mochlos; or, the Conflict of the Faculties', trans. by Richard Rand and Amy Wygant, in *Logomachia: The Conflict of the Faculties*, ed. by Richard Rand (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), pp. 1-34 (p. 22).

cause us to reimagine precisely what disciplines are. Clearly, disciplines delimit, circumscribe, or marshal intellectual work; just as clearly, this is not all that they do.

Disciplines produce opportunities for collective intellectual labour and a common orientation toward knowledge; in short, they produce intellectual *community*. In this sense, they are not merely constraints placed on intellectual producers but also engender possibilities for forms of intellectual work which would not otherwise exist. Although this is to some extent an idealised conception of academic work, nonetheless disciplines do contain this capacity to facilitate community. And because the constituencies and compositions of disciplines, understood as fields, are dynamic, they do not inevitably lead to intellectual stagnation or conservatism. Yet it is precisely this conservative conception of disciplinary work (including as it relates to women's studies) which both Daly and Butler endorse, both explicitly and implicitly, when they latterly criticise disciplinary processes, and concomitantly move toward self-conceptions which insist on a broader scholarly freedom: that is, on the intellectual as opposed to the academic function. By rejecting academia outright, and moving toward ideas of themselves as intellectuals, specifically, both feminists begin to see themselves as against disciplines. Daly, for instance, acerbically criticises institutionalised education for producing 'academentia' in scholars: 'Sure, there was always the dream of the university, but look what's happened to me.' Butler, meanwhile, points to what is debilitating and restrictive about disciplinary structures, arguing for a looser and more fluid conception of the university.² Whilst I agree that there are difficulties tied up with the disciplines' tendency to coagulate as coherent and restrictive intellectual spaces, in the case of

² Mary Daly with Catherine Madsen, 'The Thin Thread of Conversation: an Interview with Mary Daly', *Cross Currents*, 50.3 (2000) <<http://www.crosscurrents.org/madsenfoo.htm>> [accessed 19 February 2010] (para. 51 of 99); Judith Butler, 'Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity', *Critical Inquiry*, 35.4 (2009), 773-95 (p. 775 *et passim*).

women's studies these processes are, as I tried to show in the previous chapter, quite consistently troubled by the inherent complexity of the discipline itself. Butler and Daly argue against disciplinarity, while this thesis has conversely asked how new figurations of intellectual space, far from being straightforwardly inter- or anti-disciplinary, in fact have complex relations to that notion. Such complexity is what produces women's studies as a dynamic site containing multiple orientations to knowledge. The point is not that Daly and Butler should be chastised for failing to comprehend that potential, but rather that when we read women's studies as a field in this Bourdieusian sense, we see in a more affirmative light the promise as well as pitfalls of disciplining thought.

Academic fields have been central to the readings of Daly's and Butler's intellectual trajectories presented throughout this thesis. The accounts of those trajectories are not merely biographies but also track the development of ideas over time. In that sense, I have tried to approach institutional conditions such as the divisions between the disciplines, broad sociological conditions such as access to different sorts of education, and intellectual considerations connected to the maturation and development of ideas, as equal components in analysis. The aim has been to avoid both determinism and voluntarism and instead to think about intellectual choices in terms of attempts to *negotiate a concrete situation*. Daly does not develop a highly idiosyncratic writing style and broadly anti-academic ideas as an *automatic* (classed and gendered) response to her alienation from institutional and intellectual communities, nor are they the products of a purely intellectual assessment of important theological and feminist ideas; rather, they emerge as a *conditioned* but also *rational* strategy for developing intellectual works in a particular context. Similarly, Butler does not begin to develop work more closely aligned to the notion of the free-floating intellectual, and against the concept of academic

disciplines, as an instantaneous and unreflexive response to the framing of her as a pseudo-scholar, but nor should this change be fully attributed to a set of purely intellectual reflections on her part; rather, we should understand the changes as strategies for negotiating a concrete situation.

It is through the notion of field and habitus in symbiosis, developed in Chapter One as an appropriation, development, and critique of Bourdieu's sociological model, that this attempt to understand intellectual developments as conditioned but reflexive negotiations has been thought through. Through the continual interplay of habitus, understood as personal but also social history embodied as an orientation to knowledge and the world, and field, understood as a *specific* structural context in which an individual has some stake, strategies emerge to deal with social, institutional, and intellectual life. For Bourdieu, this capacity for reflexivity often only emerges for the relatively dominant in a field: in his discussion of the development of political lines of thought in *Distinction*, for instance, he distinguishes between the systematic *slant*, or reflexive web of principles, available to the supposedly political classes, and the politics by proxy (that is, through representatives or delegates) available to the dispossessed.³

In the theoretical model which informs this thesis, by contrast, reflexivity is a considerably more widely available resource: indeed, it is Daly who has perhaps most clearly displayed the capacity for reflexivity in her negotiations of intellectual fields. For whilst Butler has arguably been more successful at portraying herself as outside of disciplinary and therefore institutional wranglings, I would argue that it is Daly who offers the more sustained (though certainly idiosyncratic) *analysis* of institutional conditions. Daly's very early career is characterised by the hyper-identification with institutional structures which Bourdieu associates with successful working-

³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 417-26.

class students; and it is this early experience which makes the psychological break with those structures so profound. Precisely *because* university success is the lens through which Daly has measured and come to understand herself, she is able to connect her subsequent disillusionment with those structures to broader social conditions in articulate and lucid (as well as poignant) ways. The development of this capacity of the relatively dominated to reflect on the system is not always successful or even unambiguously positive, as Lois McNay has argued in her own advancement of a feminist field theory, but it is a capacity *specifically* connected to the relatively subordinated.⁴ In that sense, the capacity for reflexivity has been important for the theoretical construction as well as empirical findings of this study, despite a concomitant concentration on the social conditions which facilitate or hinder that potential.⁵

This recognition for the role of reflexivity even, or perhaps especially, in relatively dominated social spaces, is one contribution to my attempts here to produce a more *affirmative* analysis of my case studies than might generally be expected from a broadly Bourdieusian account. By this I mean that, along with issues of social consistency, constraint, and circumscription, the thesis has been interested in the potential to imagine a *new* negotiation of those constraints. Chapter Four, for instance, put forward a formulation of women's studies as discipline in which institutional *and* political conceptions of the project could co-exist in potentially productive ways. This is to take the Bourdieusian problematic (broadly, *why are things so bad?*) and, following a number of other Bourdieusians, to add a series of key feminist concerns (*where are things not as bad as all that?* and, not least, *what can we do about*

⁴ Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16.1 (1999), 95-117 (pp. 110-11).

⁵ I hope it is clear, then, that this interest in strategy, negotiation, and reflexivity is not an argument for some generalised concept like 'reflexive modernity'. I am in general agreement with Will Atkinson and other Bourdieusians' ongoing attempts to refute the deeply classed oversimplifications associated with that theory: see Will Atkinson, *Class, Individualization and Late Modernity: In Search of the Reflexive Worker* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 17-43 *et passim*.

it?). The idea is not simply to ask what the problems are, but consequently to ask what we can do differently now that we have identified them.

Although this thesis clearly takes its terms and argumentation from a number of intellectual and academic traditions and movements (in particular, Bourdieu, critical sociology, and feminist historiography), here I will argue that it offers substantial original contributions to those bodies of work. In so doing, I also hope to show *why* the thesis is useful for these broader traditions, and finally, in a more forward-looking mode, what it may help us to do in the future.

Bringing Butler and Daly together in this way has proved fruitful because they have here not been taken as representative of two opposing currents in the history of feminism, but rather as individuals on specific trajectories through educational structures and disciplinary fields. Although chosen partially because of their framings as oppositional figures in the history of feminist theory, this is not finally the work they perform in the thesis itself. Rather, their trajectories are understood as specific to them (not as representative of moments or theoretical tendencies) and, by showing the similarities as well as differences between them, we potentially get to a more nuanced and careful reading of feminist history in general. Their stories tell us about both the crucial variations of circumstance and history which mark different feminist trajectories – differences of class, educational experience, and discipline – and the similarities which help us to see what might generally be true about feminist intellectual production. And by taking two apparently extreme cases, we might more easily see what is general in the argument as a whole: the ways in which habitus and field interact to create opportunities and constraints for intellectual work.

Feasibly, however, by seeking to counter dominant narratives about Butler and Daly, the thesis has at times presented a simplistic and skewed portrait of a monolithic women's studies: by stressing these dominant narratives, I have perhaps failed to track the different ways in which these feminists are received in different sections of the field. Such a charge has been levelled against other contributors to the new feminist historiography of which I consider this thesis to be a part: that, by seeking to counter dominant narratives, such contributions tend to perform mere counter-violence by themselves simplifying the picture. If we wish to achieve a more complex idea of the feminist past, why begin by asserting that *all* feminists have presented that past in a similar way? For instance, Sara Ahmed's article on the 'new materialists' is an important piece of critical historiography, which questions the former group's recounting of feminist history (one in which all previous feminists are taken to be antithetical to the entire discipline of biology); but that reading of new materialism has been countered in an important and subtle piece by Noela Davis. Davis carefully shows how Ahmed's reading relies on an extreme simplification which downplays the genuine innovation of the new materialists: that innovation is not whether biology is incorporated into the theory but the very precise *approach* to biology which is taken. By eliding the difference between these concerns, Davis argues, Ahmed is able to present the new materialists as making a claim which they do not in fact make: that they are the first feminists to incorporate biology into feminist theory; and this is what allows Ahmed to claim that they greatly simplify the feminist past. In fact, claims Davis, it is Ahmed who simplifies the feminist present.⁶

There are surely moments in this thesis which have likewise simplified contemporary feminism, in the name of complicating our picture of the past.

⁶ Noela Davis, 'New Materialism and Feminism's Anti-Biologism: A Response to Sara Ahmed', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 16.1 (2009), 66-80; the response is to Sara Ahmed, 'Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the "New Materialism"', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 15.1 (2008), 23-39.

But there are a number of justifications and counters which I would make to that claim. Firstly, I have concentrated on dominant narratives not because they are ubiquitous but because they are *insidious*: as I have tried to show, traces of these stories can be found in unexpected places, and easily seep into our ideas about feminism despite our vigilance. Attempts are made to counter dominant narratives of the feminist past yet they remain in the background, and so it is worth taking the time to bring them to light, even sometimes at the expense of full recognition of the complexity of the present. Such constructions of the feminist past have been connected in this study to claims, such as that made in my conference conversation at the very beginning of the thesis, that particular works dealing substantively with gender and written by self-identified feminists could be unproblematically excluded from the domain of women's studies proper. Otherwise valid and thoughtful critiques of specific feminists can quite easily slip into this kind of police work, and that is why it is crucial to persist in interrogating pervasive and common-sense stories about the feminist past.

And secondly, by adding the sociological concerns which have informed this thesis to feminist historiographical work, we can contextualise both dominant narratives and the individuals to whom those narratives often refer. Through sociological contextualisation we can potentially avoid the pitfalls of mere counter-simplification and instead try to construct a fuller picture of feminism, past and present. If recent work in critical feminist historiography has sought to argue against simplistic readings of the feminist past which reduce the complexity of that tradition to a linear progression toward intersectionality or regression toward fragmentation, it has nonetheless remained relatively quiet on both the specific individuals who come to be framed as the privileged conduits of that history, and the broader institutional conditions which facilitate its emergence. By bringing these

sociological elements to the fore of an historiographical approach, we potentially offer a closer reading of feminist history: one which hopes to be resistant to mere counter-simplifications and further generalisations. In particular, putting Bourdieu to work for this feminist historiography is novel, and allows for greater account to be taken of the sociological reasons for feminist intellectual trajectories and histories.

There are a number of avenues which this thesis did not pursue, but which could provide interesting possibilities for further research. Firstly, Butler has recently turned her attentions to a number of theological and religious concerns to which I have not substantively addressed myself here, but which could clearly provide interesting additions to Chapter Three.⁷ These recent works, firstly, see Butler offering accounts of recent political events and their coverage in the media, and secondly represent yet more forays into new disciplinary territory. In these senses, this most recent work largely confirms two of the central contentions of the Butler chapter: that her intellectual capital facilitates a certain disciplinary dilettantism, and that she increasingly writes on topical political subjects which might be considered of general (that is, not disciplinarily circumscribed) intellectual interest. The analysis could also be fruitfully extended to compare the trajectories of other prominent feminists. In particular, since both case studies here are white, ethnicity has hovered in the background of the analyses rather than attaining prominence. The veracity of the model could be strengthened (or indeed challenged) by the inclusion of feminists of colour.

Despite these gaps in the range and scope of the thesis, I take it to be an important contribution to a series of ongoing debates regarding feminist knowledge-production, the role and alleged complicity of feminism in the

⁷ Judith Butler, 'Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time', *British Journal of Sociology*, 59.1 (2008), 1-23; *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and, with Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

academy through the discipline of women's studies, and the effects of class and gender in women's experiences of formal education. Not least because I have felt these effects in my own trajectory through universities, it is my conviction that sustained application of a critical sociological approach produces not only greater understanding of institutional structures such as those explored in this thesis, but also the capacity to change them.

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